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THE REPUBLIC DIVIDED: LE TEMPS AND THE
POPULAR FRONT IN FRANCE

by



Nels Wayne Mogensen

A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Republic Divided; Le Temps and the Popular Front in France", submitted by Nels Wayne Mogensen in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The essential purpose of this thesis is to determine the attitude of Le Temps, one of the Third Republic's most respected and influential newspapers, towards the Popular Front. After a brief analysis of the unsettled political situation in the France of the mid-1930's, and a description of the development of the Popular Front into a full-fledged alliance of the parties of the Left, the thesis goes on to examine Le Temps' editorial policy with regard to domestic affairs in France during the period of Popular Front preponderance.

It is clear that Le Temps verbally resisted virtually every aspect of Popular Front policy; its deficit financing, its social and economic reforms, its tolerance of working-class agitation, and its anti-fascism, with consistent intransigence. Yet, the newspaper was often far from willing to envisage the Blum government's downfall. Thus, a seeming paradox was evident in the editorial columns of Le Temps for many months, as it opposed the entire policy of the government without opposing the government itself. This curious and ambivalent attitude arose, it would seem, from a double fear on the part of Le Temps. Le Temps feared that if the Blum government were overthrown by the Right, something like revolution might break out, and it also feared that if Blum was overthrown by the Communists, his government would be replaced by a much less moderate cabinet. Only by the

spring of 1937, when either consequence seemed less likely than in earlier months, did Le Temps permit itself to call for the overthrow of the government.

If Le Temps did not desire the immediate collapse of the Popular Front coalition, it did attempt to convince its readers that the presence of that coalition in power was allowing, actively and passively, the installation of a form of fascism in France. By its tolerant and permissive behaviour towards the CGT, the government, in Le Temps' opinion, was favouring the development of a proletarian, fascist dictatorship over the economic and social life of the French nation. The economic doctrine upheld by Le Temps was that of classical liberalism in its purest form, and the most commonplace interventions of the Popular Front government in the field of economic activity were branded as being fascist measures. The modest attempts of the government to protect the regime from the danger posed by Right wing extremists were attacked as instances of undemocratic illiberalism.

This stance of unbending opposition to the Left was complemented by an attitude of benevolence towards all elements of the Right. Therefore, it can be affirmed that Le Temps, which has been considered to be middle-of-the-road at the turn of the Century, had become intransigently Right wing by the late 1930's, reflecting the intensified divisions of the Republic and the virtual disappearance of the political Centre at that time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PREFACE

The study that I have undertaken in this thesis is restricted to an examination of the positions taken by Le Temps with regard to domestic politics in France over a relatively short time-span of approximately one-and-a-half years. During this period, the political alliance (perhaps the term phenomenon might be more expressive) known as the Popular Front burst into the scene with a good deal of sound and fury, ruled briefly and for a time energetically, and finally met with an inglorious death at the hands of the French Senate. The year in which the Popular Front held France in its sway is often referred to as a period of experimentation. The description is exact. This was a political experiment in that, for the first time, Socialists, Communists and Radicals, the entire French Left, attempted to work together to rule France. It was also an economic experiment. The new government hoped to reinvigorate the economy by increasing the buying power of the lower strata of society. For the Socialists, this exercise of power was also an ideological experiment, as Léon Blum, before accepting the premier's office, told his fellow party members. "Il s'agit, en somme, de savoir s'il est possible, dans le cadre du régime actuel, d'assurer un soulagement

(ii)

suffisant aux misères de ceux qui souffrent."¹ The implication was that if the SFIO (Section française de l'Internationale Ouvrière) were unable to extract more justice from the regime through an exercise of power in the framework of the Popular Front, they would have to eventually consider overthrowing it in a Socialist conquest of power.

For these reasons, the fortunes of the Popular Front experiment aroused a good deal of interest among both hostile and sympathetic foreign observers. Among Frenchmen, the guinea pigs of the experiment, there was naturally less scientific detachment. If the victory of the Popular Front was greeted with rejoicing on the Left, one might expect that the Right would regard it with corresponding hostility and trepidation.

It seemed to me, therefore, that it would be of considerable interest to examine the attitude towards the Popular Front of a newspaper which Manévy, a standard authority on the press, has described in the following terms. "Dans les milieux d'affaires et les classes dirigeantes, en France comme à l'étranger, il (Le Temps) représenta, avec une autorité indiscutée,

Paris, capitale politique."² Carleton Hayes called Le Temps a French national institution, comparing it with London Times and the New York Times.³ Apart from the prestige of Le Temps in foreign capitals and among the French bourgeoisie, its opinions are also of interest because they had traditionally represented the thinking of the moderate French Right, the constitutional opposition to the Popular Front.⁴

Founded in 1861, Le Temps began its existence as a moderately republican opponent of the Second Empire, managing to stay afloat with the aid of liberal protestant Alsatian industrialists and of the Orléans family. From the outset, it sought a tone of measured respectability, of moderation, indeed, of pedantry. Its second director, Adrien Hébrard, is credited with the following directive to his editorialists. "Be sanctimonious, gentlemen."⁵ One feels that the same directive was still in force in 1936 - '37. Le Temps remained a firm supporter of the Republic over the years, and, after some hesitation, it even joined the 'Dreyfusards'. Lest this give the impression that Le Temps was a paper of the Left, it should be pointed out that its position during the Dreyfus affair was probably conditioned by

the religious proclivities of its publishers, of which Hayes writes. "From the religious point of view, Le Temps, while respecting Catholicism as the spiritual background of the nation, has distinctly protestant sympathies and pro-Jewish sympathies. Its society column, for instance, notes primarily the activities of the Jewish financial aristocracy."⁶

If Le Temps was, as Raymond Manévy calls it, the quasi-official newspaper of the Third Republic,⁷ it did not always defend the policies of those in power. It fought the anti-clerical Combes ministry as well as Herriot's Radical ministry in 1924-'25, and around 1930, it maintained a systematic silence concerning the then reputedly Leftist Radical, Daladier.⁸ As can be seen, its tolerance of leaders and ministries extended to the middle of the political spectrum and no further.

In 1929, Le Temps was sold by Hébrard's grandson to two heavy industry groups, the 'Comité des Forges' and the 'Union des Mines', which also controlled, directly or indirectly, a number of other influential publications, such as Le Journal des Débats, L'Information, L'Ordre, and Le Bulletin Quotidien d'Informations Economiques.⁹

This seems to have somewhat shaken the staff of Le Temps, as de Livois indicates.

Malgré la présence du petit-fils d'Adrien Hébrard à la tête de ce journal où figurent d'éminents juristes, Joseph Barthélémy et Ernest Roume, de nombreux rédacteurs quittent Le Temps parce que la ligne politique est maintenant contrôlée par Henri de Peyerhimhoff et François de Wendel et, avec eux, les Houillères et la Comité des Forges.¹⁰

The extent of the control exercised by the new owners of Le Temps is difficult to evaluate, but it seems certain that the evolution of Le Temps, under the joint directorship of Emile Mireaux and Jacques Chastenet, was towards the Right during the 1930's. Eugen Weber, the historian of the Action Française, tells us that Le Temps was quite favourable to the Action Française and the other nationalist leagues during the early '30's,¹¹ to which we might add the testimony of Georges Lefranc.

Au cours de ces années, l'attitude du Temps à beaucoup inquiété la gauche. Le journal était considéré comme le porte-parole d'une parti au moins de la grande industrie, qu'on incarnait dans le 'Comité des Forges'. Or il avait paru à certains moments très proche de certaines Ligues...¹²

Partiality towards the anti-parliamentary leagues is not the most serious accusation that has been levelled at Le Temps. La Flèche de Paris, an influential neo-Radical paper, charged Le Temps with accepting money from the Czarist government between 1901 and 1905; from the Soviet government, "... de subventions se montant au total de 520,000 francs pour publier pendant une période de huit mois, des articles et des correspondances sur la Russie, favorable aux intérêts de l'USSR", in 1922 and from Primo de Rivera, one-and-half million in 1930.¹³ These, of course are merely accusations, accusations which are difficult to credit. While this sort of venality may have been normal for many Paris newspapers of that epoch,¹⁴ Le Temps, with its powerful financial backing seems unlikely to have had to resort to it, particularly after 1929.

Whatever Le Temps may have been accused of by its political enemies, the newspaper did exercise an influence

which is incontestable, in spite of its meager circulation¹⁵ and its Spartan format (no photographs, cartoons, or headlines). It will be my object, therefore, to carefully trace the evolution of its attitude towards the Popular Front in the pages which succeed the introductory chapter dealing with the state of political forces in France of the 1930's as well as with the development of the Popular Front to January, 1936.

Footnotes to the Preface

1. R. Manévy, La presse de la Troisième République, Paris, J. Forêt, 1955, p. 209.
2. C. J. H. Hayes, France: A Nation of Patriots, New York, Columbia University Press, 1930, pp. 455-456.
3. Léon Blum, L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum, Paris, Albin Michel, 1964, Vol. 4, Part 1, p. 262.
4. Jacques Kayser, "L'Historien et la presse", Révue Historique, Vol. 218 (1957), p. 248. Kayser divides the newspapers of the Popular Front era according to this classification: "...communistes, socialistes, Rassemblement populaire moins les communistes et les socialistes, opposition constitutionnelle, adversaires du régime".
5. Manévy, op. cit., p. 213.
6. Hayes, op. cit., p. 456.
7. Manévy, op. cit., p. 209.
8. Kayser, op. cit., p. 298.
9. C. A. Micaud, The French Right and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939, Durham, Duke University Press, 1943, p. 8, H.W. Ehrmann, Organized Business in France, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 34, Robert Aron, The Vichy Régime, 1940-1944, New York, MacMillan, 1958, p. 165, and La Flèche de Paris, 1 August, 1934, p. 4.
10. R. de Livois, Histoire de la presse française. tome II: de 1881 à nos jours, Lausanne, Spés, 1965, p. 515. The question of the control exercised by the trusts is discussed again in my conclusion.
11. E. Weber, Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth Century France, Stanford University Press, 1962, pp. 355, 364, and 372.

12. G. Lefranc; Histoire du Front populaire, 1934-1938, Paris, Payot, 1965, pp. 119-120.
13. La Flèche de Paris, 1 February, 1936, p. 12
14. See A. Werth, The Twilight of France, 1933-1940, New York, Harpers, 1942, p. 52, To give an example of such venality, Werth quotes well informed diplomatic sources in Paris as estimating that Italy had spent roughly 600,000 francs in subsidies to French newspapers for a pro-Italian press campaign in the second half of 1935.
15. Its circulation was around 80,000, according to É. Bonnefous, Histoire politique de la Troisième République. Tome 6: vers la guerre, Du Front populaire à la Conférence de Munich (1936-1938), Paris, PUF, 1965, p. 77. Manévy, op. cit., gives a figure of 70,000 to 80,000 copies, p. 213.

CHAPTER ONE

Failure on the Right and Preparations on the Left

(i) The Parties

The Republic Divided, the title which has been chosen for this study, was not so chosen for its sonority. It indicates a real situation in the France of the 1930's. The French nation was more firmly divided between Left and Right and more clearly conscious of the fact that at almost any other time in its history. Both the Left and the Right held mass meetings and huge demonstrations against the other, ostensibly in defence of the same Republic. Yet this Republic meant different things to each party. To the Right, or Party of Established Order as François Goguel prefers to call it¹, defending the Republic meant keeping the Republic just as it was, or, better still, as it had been in some Golden Age of the past. Of course, rectifications in its structure were not ruled out by the Right provided that these were in the direction of increased social, economic and political stability, carried out in a spirit which took the national traditions as a guide. The Left, or Party of Movement in Goguel's terminology, wished to defend the Republic as well. Firmly committed to the concept of progress, although diversified in its notion of how progress was to be achieved,

the Left felt that the Republic could best be defended by the implementation of socially and economically egalitarian policies, which would render the regime more equitable to citizens of all classes. Of course, the method par excellence of Republican defence was to keep the controls of government out of the hands of the factious reactionaries, or the dangerous revolutionaries, depending on whether your sympathies lay with the Left or with the Right.

The trench which separates Left and Right has varied over the years in depth. At times, as under the conciliatory hand of Poincaré in the late twenties, the trench seemed easily crossed. But at others - and the middle thirties demonstrate this state of affairs - the trench became momentarily nearly unbridgeable, with the Left and the Right in violent hostility to one another.

In order to comprehend the general political situation in the France of the 1930's, it is necessary to examine the relative position of the parties with care. Mr. René Rémond, basing his analysis² upon a supposed historical continuity observable on the Right, discerns three major currents of

right-wing opinion in France. The oldest current first manifested itself as legitimism, then as royalism in the early years of the Third Republic, reappearing in the 20th Century as the intransigent, strongly Catholic and nationalist extreme Right. Its electoral support was largely from rural Catholic constituencies on the southern fringes of the Massif Central, in the West of France with its chouan traditions, and in Franche-Comté and Alsace-Lorraine in the East. Although the grouping in parliament of right-wing deputies often seems a matter of chance, most parliamentarians of this shading sat as independents or as members of Louis Marin's Republican Federation. In this case, as always with French political parties, the name of the party must not be considered as indicative of its orientation. Some members of the Republican Federation, Xavier Vallat, for example, were frank royalists³. The Action Française was, generally speaking, the intellectual backbone of this intransigent Right

The second current of the French Right traces its roots to those who rallied to Louis-Philippe after 1830, to Napoleon III under the Liberal Empire and, after 1871, to the Third Republic. Essentially opportunists, they represented

the urban, capitalist elite of France, as well as the elite of the administration and the university. This Moderate Right adhered as fully to the doctrines of classical economic liberalism and laissez-faire in 1930 as it had in 1830. But on social questions the Moderates tended to even greater intransigence than the far Right, and their economic strength re-enforced their ability to resist social change as Lucien Genet intimates

"Quelle est l'influence exacte des grands groupements d'intérêts industriels et financiers, de la Banque, des grandes fortunes capitalistes sur le monde politique? Il est difficile de répondre, mais cette influence existe. La grande presse prend une extension inconnue jusqu'à ce jour, et Paris-Soir, qui va tirer à un million d'exemplaires en 1934, sera un instrument de propagande remarquable au service d'intérêts particuliers." ⁴

It would be worth remembering at this point that Le Temps was owned by the coal and steel cartels. That Le Temps could be qualified as official may seem surprising until we recall that the party of Established Order was never in power as often or for as long in recent times as between the two world wars, ruling for sixteen of the twenty-

two years between the end of World War I and the Armistice of 1940. These governments of the Right were invariably centered around the Moderate parties of the Right: the Republicans of the Left, the Left Independents, the Radical Left and the Radical Independents - not those of the extreme Right.

The third element of the French Right, whose ancestry begins with the supporters of Napoleon III and reappears as Boulangism in the late 1880's, believes in an authoritarian, plebiscitary government with the interests of the common people being defended against the depredations of uncontrolled capitalism. Rémond qualifies it as demagogic and tending towards violence, suggesting that the anti-parliamentary leagues of the first half of the 20th Century, the Poujadist movement and even Gaullism conform to a certain extent this tradition⁵.

In his attempts to establish a supposed historical continuity within the French Right, Rémond fails to take the element of change sufficiently into account, so that for the interwar period his analysis loses much of its validity. By 1936 it was no longer possible in practice to distinguish

between the legitimist current and the Bonapartist tradition. Both have developed unmistakably fascist characteristics. In spite of all the attempts of French historians to prove that their nation has been practically immune to the fascist infection⁶, the evidence to the contrary seems overwhelming. Let us take Mr. Xavier Vallat, dean of the deputies of the extreme Right, as an example. Mr. Vallat was Catholic and monarchist and a good friend of the Action Française, but he was also a member of Georges Valois' obviously fascist "Faisceaux" and later a member of the Croix de Feu⁷. That Vallat was able to find himself in sympathy with this varied assortment of groups illustrates the rapprochement between the different anti-democratic forces of the extreme Right, the explanation of which is perhaps partially indicated by two leftist historians, Danos and Gibelin ...

"Le fascisme, en effet, n'est pas le phénomène accidentel, le monstre sociologique que certains ont cru qu'il était. Il n'est qu'un des produits du régime capitaliste, une forme autoritaire de la domination politique de la bourgeoisie, soucieuse de préserver ses privilèges."⁸

This is only a partial definition because it does not explain the anti-capitalist oratory of the fascists (which did not prevent Doriot and France's other would-be fuhrers from accepting the financial support of capitalists⁹, and it certainly did not prevent Doriot from losing his working-class support¹⁰). The aspect of capitalism most despised by fascists was its liberalism¹¹, as Maxence's description of his concept of the good society illustrates.

"Une société libérée de la démocratie, mais aussi affranchie du capitalisme; une société où les prolétaires seraient ré-intégrés dans la nation et les financiers empêchés d'abuser les biens que seule garantit la communauté productrice..."¹²

Brasilach wrote that fascism was not a doctrine, but rather a state of mind, a romantic attachment to violence and energetic action¹³. This sort of state of mind found little scope for self-expression in a liberal, democratic society. If the fascists disliked capitalism, however, they hated Marxism (did the fact that Marx had been a Jew have anything to do with this?) which Maxence called "la dictature de l'état", considering it to be more stifling than liberalism, which

was merely "la dicature de l'argent"¹⁴. Nolte even goes so far as to assert that fascism was simply anti-Marxism, that without Marxism, there would have been no fascism¹⁵. It must be admitted that if French fascist leaders wished to reform capitalism, their more immediate concern (this was especially the case with Doriot, the archetype of the French fascist) was to exterminate communism. Since anti-capitalism was a secondary concern with fascist leaders, one might be excused for wondering whether it was at all a concern with their largely bourgeois following¹⁶, and whether fascism was not indeed merely an extreme form of bourgeois defence, as Lipset, Weber and Danos and Gibelin would have it¹⁷.

If one chooses to follow in the footsteps of most French political analysts he would now pass directly to a description of the Left, or Party of Movement, without speaking of a political Centre. François Goguel is quite categorical about this, using electoral statistics to prove the non-existence of a Centre in French politics, and to prove the uncanny and stable division of the French electorate between the Left and the Right. He estimates that in the fifty-year period from the election of 1877 to

that of 1928, the variation in the electoral strength of the two political families, Left and Right was to the order of a mere one-half of one percent¹⁸. He, as Siegfried had done before, and as Dupeux was to do for the elections of 1936, demonstrated the equally amazing geographical stability of the division between Left and Right in France. This is perhaps the most logical method of analysis, except that it does not envisage the possibility that a party may be wavering about that trench between Left and Right, in preparation to crossing it, as the Radical¹⁹ party seems to do from time to time.

Even if the Radicals did behave electorally as a party of the Left most of the time, making electoral alliances with the SFIO Socialists and the independent socialists, their behaviour in the Palais Bourbon was somewhat more ambivalent. The key position of the Radical party in the arithmetical centre of the political spectrum made their presence in any government of the Right essential, and indeed, even in the 1930's, the Radicals were to be found in rightist coalitions as often as in leftist coalitions.

The reason for this seeming ambiguity lay in the

nature of the Radicals' electoral clientele, the lower middle classes and the peasants, who since 1900, had been reasonably well off, with their savings safely salted away in government bonds and private securities. In consequence, their desire for social and economic change has been lessened, as André Siegfried explains

"La contradiction intime du Français ne nous échappera pas: politiquement son coeur est à gauche, mais sa poche est à droite ... et en pratique chaque français a une poche. Il en résulte qu'une prudence différée, disons plus simplement son intérêt, vient tôt ou tard contredire l'idéologie extrémiste où il se complaît. Ce Don Quichotte est toujours accompagné d'un Sancho Pança qui ne le lâche pas d'une semelle. Aussi le toujours à gauche ne joue-t-il bien que dans les 'gestes symboliques'." ²⁰

Peter Larmour has called the Radicals "a collection of politicians masquerading as a party"²¹. These politicians knew their constituents well and had changed with that electorate while continuing to appeal to them in a traditional leftist terminology - anti-clerical and anti-capitalist. Linked with the socialists by virtue of the common membership

of adherents of both groups in the anti-clerical Masonic lodges, the Radicals and the SF10 were easily able to come to an understanding when crises threatened. But ordinarily the economic and social conservatism (and ignorance) of the whole Radical party from its left wing to its right wing was pronounced. There was an almost religious belief in the need to balance the budget, and in financial austerity; devaluation was equated with inflation, exchange controls with totalitarianism. Larmour suggests that the behaviour of the Radicals was equally moderated by the need for election funds, surmising that, "as the principal governing party of France, the Radicals probably received a substantial part of their income from interested parties."²² Three times the Radical party rather suddenly decided against the nationalization of insurance companies, which naturally aroused suspicion²³. In contrast, the Radical foreign policy was leftist, since this was one area where being leftist did not threaten the voter's pocket. In addition, electoral declarations of support for the League of Nations, reapprochement with Germany and disarmament found approval in a nation whose desire for peace was profound.

To the immediate left of the Radicals were several groups, known collectively as the Socialist Intergroup, composed of individuals who either felt uncomfortable in a mass party or who had broken away from the SF10 at various times usually because they disagreed with the refusal of the SF10 to participate in Radical-led coalitions. This group contained numerous able politicians whose ambitions were often stronger than their principles. The Intergroup included Marquet, Déat and friends, who were later to collaborate with the Germans; Pierre Laval, who had moved from the extreme left and whose subsequent career is well known; Joseph Paul-Boncour and Henry de Jouvenel, in whom liberalism and devotion to the League of Nations were joined to a belief in corporate syndicalism. This was the same school to which Aristide Briand and Paul Painlevé had belonged.

The SF10 had seceded from the unified Socialist party at the Congress of Tours in 1920, when the majority of the latter decided to adhere to the newly formed and Moscow-based Third or Communist International and thus form the French Parti Communiste (PC). Led by Léon Blum,

the minority maintained its adherence to the older Second (Socialist) International and was soon rejoined by a number of Communists who had either been excluded from the PC, or who had left for their own reasons. Because of its relative moderation, the SFIO had soon outdistanced the PC in both membership and votes to become the second largest party in France, electing 131 deputies in 1932 compared with 10 Communist deputies elected²⁴. Until the Depression and the schism of 1933, when the entire Right wing of the party (30 deputies) deserted it to support the efforts of the Radicals to deal with the financial crisis by deflation, the SFIO had seemed to be a harmless reformist party, which still used a revolutionary Marxist vocabulary to cover a lack of revolutionary intentions. Blum was the party's theorist as well as its undisputed leader²⁵. He carefully distinguished between the exercise of power and the conquest of power. The conquest of power could only come about following a proletarian revolution, which the leadership of the party could do little to instigate, but which would hand them power on a platter, as it were. If power did not thus come to the party as the product of a revolution, but

rather through an electoral victory in the framework of the bourgeois political system, it would be nothing less than a swindle for the party to use this victory to inaugurate its revolution. Blum's sense of sportsmanship would, in this case, confine the role of the party to that of bringing about structural reforms, (e.g. nationalizations) to the capitalist economy, which in his mind, would prepare the way for a future revolution. This would be the exercise of power. From the above, one can see that Blum was essentially defining the party's policy as reformist, while avoiding a categorical admission of this.

The Communist party also had its origin in the Congress of Tours. The majority of the French Socialist party at that congress voted to accept the twenty-one conditions laid down by the communist Third International as a preliminary to adherence. The minority led by Léon Blum having withdrawn, the remainder of the party was racked by dissensions, leftist and rightist deviations (the proper policy and tactics having been defined in the twenty-one conditions), schisms and expulsions for the next ten years until 1930 when Maurice Thorez finally emerged as leader. Thorez had the firm backing of the

International and, in return, his loyalty to both it and to Stalin was unconditional. He was ably seconded by Jacques Duclos, André Marty, Marcel Cachin, and Jacques Doriot (although the latter accommodated himself badly to Communist discipline) and undertook a massive reorganization of the party in the early thirties, the aim of which was to make the basic unit of the party the factory cell, thereby replacing the older regional system of organization. The disruptive process of reorganization, some of the rather 'unpatriotic' policies of the PC (independence for Alsace-Lorraine, anti-colonialism) and its continued running battle with the 'social-fascists' of the SFIO caused the party to steadily lose both members and votes. Even the advent of the depression in France after 1931 did not seem to improve the position of the PC. Only with the beginning of the Popular Front was the Communist position to improve significantly.

(ii) The Developments of the Mid-Thirties

With the close of World War I, most Frenchmen shared the hope that France would enjoy the benefits of a

long peace in relative security. By 1933 it was evident that both the benefits and the security had somehow failed to materialize. A world depression was just beginning to have severe effects in France. Although France was to be less stricken by urban unemployment than Germany or England, its effects were severely felt in a country used to full employment²⁶. The Depression no doubt was most severely felt in the countryside, for a relatively large percentage of the French population was dependent on agricultural earnings, and one of the most important effects of the Depression was the complete undermining of the price of agricultural products. Various governments attempted to deal with the economic crisis by raising tariffs, establishing import quotas and minimum prices. These measures, however, had the unfortunate effect of maintaining French prices at a higher level than those abroad, thereby making it more and more difficult to find export markets for French goods. Since the Depression had arrived later in France than elsewhere, she had at first benefited from the salutary effect of foreign investment placed in her banks and industries in the hope that it would find a haven there from the

otherwise general economic collapse. This capital had provided France with a huge foreign-exchange and budget surplus in 1930 and 1931 and accustomed her to extravagant public expenditures²⁷.

The first effect of the Depression in France was to reverse this flow of capital, which in turn seemed to necessitate a reduction in government spending. In 1932, the Left had won a great electoral victory which, however, they were unable to exploit to the full because of the inability of the SFIO and the Radicals to agree on a common programme of legislative action²⁸. Edouard Herriot, president of the Radical party, therefore formed a government largely composed of Radicals and members of the Socialist Intergroup, but which enjoyed the support of the SFIO. The most serious problem facing the government was the prospect of a serious budgetary deficit. The natural reaction of the government was to seek ways of cutting down on expenditures, and Herriot chose to reduce the salaries of public officials and to lower the defence budget. The first of these measures met with resistance from the Socialists and were passed without Socialist support. Herriot fell in December of

1932 over the issue of whether or not to continue the payment of inter-allied loans in spite of the fact that Germany had ceased making reparation payments to France, but the five Radical-dominated cabinets which succeeded each other in the next thirteen months had no better luck than Mr. Herriot in significantly reducing the deficit. However, they all managed to incur the hostility of both the SFIO and the extreme Right in their attempts to cut civil service salaries, veterans' pensions and military expenditures. Paul-Boncour, Daladier, and Sarraut all fell on the same issue. The Socialists regularly opposed the cuts in pensions and salaries, urging the government to use the opposite solution of salary increases and massive spending to increase the population's buying power and revitalize the economy. The right wing of the SFIO, however, led by Renaudel, Marquet, and Déat, objected to the failure of their party to support Radical governments since this obviously opened the way for the Right to return to power. Unable to make their point of view prevail in party councils, this wing left the SFIO to form, in November 1933, yet another element of Socialist Intergroup. This exodus of the Right-wing

Socialists, combined with the advent of Hitler in Germany, caused the SFIO to take a marked swing to the left in the next few years²⁹. The example of the inability or unwillingness of the German Left to unite in the face of fascism and the consequent results lay heavy on the minds of French leftists³⁰. As a solution to the centrifugality of the French Left, various renegades in the manner of Gaston Bergery, Marcel Déat and Jacques Doriot examined the possibilities of a Left authoritarianism.

January and February of 1934 were to lay the foundations of the unity of the French Left. A clever Jewish swindler by the name of Stavisky died in a chalet at Chamonix, after having procured 19 adjournments of his pending trial, and several members of the Radical Chautemps Ministry were plausibly accused of having favoured his dubious activities³¹. The Right and its press began a noisy campaign for an investigation into the affair, accusing the police and government of murdering Stavisky to silence him, the official version being that the man had committed suicide. Throughout January, the anti-parliamentary Rightist leagues; the Action Française, the Jeunesse patriotes, the Solidarité

française and the Croix de Feu, rioted in the streets. On January 27th, the Chautemps government resigned to allow a new government to institute an inquiry into the charges of corruption. The first move of the new Daladier government was to fire Jean Chiappe, the prefect of the Paris police force, who had a reputation for harshness with leftist rioters and, inversely, for indulgence towards rightist disturbers of the peace. Unfortunately, the government made itself look rather ridiculous in the process by promoting Chiappe upstairs to the governorship of Morocco (which he refused) and Thomé, head of the Sûreté, to the position of director of the Comédie Française. The rightist leagues, angered by Chiappe's dismissal and distrusting the Daladier Government's will to get to the bottom of the Stavisky scandal, came out in force on February 6 to the number of perhaps 200,000 and converged toward the Chamber of Deputies from various points. They were stopped only after a vigorous battle in which the police were forced to fire on the mob, fourteen rioters and a policeman losing their lives..

Daladier, although assured of a majority by Léon Blum's Socialist party (Blum was convinced and

remained so, as did President Lebrun, that the events of February 6 constituted a full-fledged attempt to carry out a fascist putsch), resigned to placate the rioters, who instantly became calm. Two questions arise from the events of February 6. Was this really an attempt to overthrow the regime or merely a form of pressure to force Daladier to renounce governing with the support of the Left, and in this way bring a right-wing coalition to power? Were the rioters fascist? Both questions have given rise to endless controversy³². The first question remains unanswered and probably unanswerable. In reply to the second question Jacques Fauvet quips³³, if the leagues were not subjectively fascist, objectively they were. Most Frenchmen believed at the time that the Croix de Feu in particular posed a definite threat to the Republic. With its great meetings, rapid mobilizations, its paramilitary organization, its salutes and blue shirts, it was certainly reminiscent of similar formations in Italy and Germany. Moreover, the vague and threatening language of Colonel de la Rocque, the Croix de Feu leader, had an authoritarian ring to it even when the man was attempting to address himself to the underprivileged strata of society. A

speech which this associate of Ernest Mercier³⁴ gave in Neuilly on the morrow of the Popular Front victory illustrates this point admirably....

"Déjà nos idées prennent le pouvoir; ceux qui veulent les appliquer n'en sont pas digne. Ils sont les élus de l'or de Moscou. Mais nous sommes à la veille d'une grande victoire et ceux qui sont nos frères viendront bientôt à nous ... Nos décisions dépendront de celles que prennent nos adversaires. Les exprimer dès maintenant serait de notre part prématuré. Nous ne disons jamais à l'avance ce que nous ferons, mais ce que nous avons décidé de faire, nous le faisons."³⁵

At any rate, what is important is that February 6 served the cause of the Popular Front by making the entire French Left and perhaps equally important, the Communist International believe that fascists in France had made a bid for power. With the example of Germany to goad them, the obvious solution was anti-fascist unity on the Left.

The next two years, in which France was ruled by governments of National Union (coalitions composed of the Moderate and the extreme Right as well as the Radicals) or by governments of concentration (the Moderate Right and

Radicals in coalition), may be justifiably considered as a unit. The period has two common features; the abdication of responsibility by the legislature in favour of the executive and the concerted attempt by the Right to re-invigorate the economy and restore governmental finances by a policy of budgetary deflation. The Radical party had lost confidence in itself and was no longer sure of what it stood for³⁶. It was to efface itself in favour of the Right in 1934 and 1935, then in favour of the Left in 1936 and 1937, withdrawing its support from each in turn without being able to develop a policy of its own. In the legislatures of 1934 and 1935, the deputies voted full powers to Doumergue, Flandin and Laval, who then regulated the economy by decree laws. Each of the three ministries initiated measures carrying the earlier Radical attempts at deflation to their logical extreme.

The experiment proved to be unsuccessful and immensely unpopular. The budgetary deficit continued to rise; in 1934, it was 8.8 billion francs, and 1935, 10.4 billion. In spite of wage and rent cuts amounting to 10% during Laval's administration alone, the cost of living failed to drop significantly. Unemployment reached its

height in the winter of 1935 and trade figures hit a new low in this same year. Between 1929 and 1935, the number of bankruptcies rose from 708 to 1248, to fall to 935 in 1936, indicating the distress of small, unprotected and fiercely competing industries. Civil service salaries fell by 15%, those of workers in commerce and industry by 31% and agricultural income by 75% in the same period. With 100 for a base in 1929, the index of dividends distributed by the cartellized sector of the economy fell to 71 in 1935, for the rest, to 33. The actual buying power of salaries fell by 25% for the period, while rents, the prices of gas, electricity, and public transportation actually rose in spite of the deflationary measures. To sum up, it may be said that the severe deflationary policies of the Right in 1934 and 1935 had failed to solidify the franc or to achieve any resurgence in industrial production and had certainly brought a good deal of misery to lower income groups³⁷.

Meanwhile the political climate of the country was growing more fevered as time went on. The government of Doumergue (February 9 to November 8, 1934) had come to power with the intention of reforming the constitution.

It failed in this because the tactlessness of Doumergue offended an already disgruntled Radical party. On the resignation of the Doumergue ministry, after the withdrawal of its Radical members, a vast Croix de Feu demonstration paraded beneath his window. Doumergue, wearing the basque beret (an element of the Croix de Feu's accoutrements) received their acclamations. This, even more than February 6, gave the impression that the rule of the parliamentary Right favoured the growth of the Croix de Feu and that the links between the two were even closer than previously suspected³⁸.

During the summer of 1935, the Left began to show increasing combativeness, but ever since February 6, 1934, Left and Right skirmishers had clashed bloodily in the streets. By late 1935, the atmosphere seemed laden with forebodings of civil war³⁹, when, unexpectedly the leaders of the Croix de Feu, Ybarnégaray and de la Rocque, agreed to the dissolution of their league in December⁴⁰.

In this period the foreign policy of the Right passed from intransigent militarism to a policy of tacitly giving the dictators their own way⁴¹. On April 7, 1934, the Doumergue government rejected negotiations with Hitler.

"La France assurera désormais sa sécurité par ses propres moyens"⁴² was the keynote of a note sent to England. In a like manner, on May 2, 1935, France signed a mutual assistance treaty with the Soviet Union. But in a foreign policy debate of December 27, 1935, Blum was able to call the followers of Laval neophytes of pacifism because of their argument that sanctions against Italy would mean war. This may be taken as evidence of a very strange phenomenon. After a half a century of xenophobic, belligerent nationalism, the French Right was beginning to take a more qualified position on the subject, so that Charles Maurras in 1940 would call the Armistice which formalized France's subjection to the new European Order of Hitler a "divine surprise".

(iii) The Origins of the Alliance

Having sketched the background against which the Popular Front developed, it would now be opportune to follow the course of that development to the beginning of the electoral campaign which brought this novel coalition to power.

A key factor in the formation of the Popular Front was the attitude of the Communist Party. Observers of the Right tend to adopt the rather simple-minded view that everything done by the French Communist party was the result of orders originating in Moscow. It would be more correct to argue that the French Communists, although highly sensitive to criticism and advice from the Third International, did maintain a certain tactical independence⁴³. That the French party's avowed policy followed that of the Soviet Union reflects a desire on the part of its leaders and militants to maintain complete solidarity with the Comintern, rather than blind obedience to Stalin's orders. The loyalty of the French Communists should not be underestimated, however, for new Soviet policy must have occasionally been somewhat hard to digest. The declaration that Laval obtained from Stalin, in May 1935, at the time of the signing of the Franco-Soviet mutual assistance pact, to the effect that: "M. Staline comprend et approuve pleinement la politique de défense nationale faite par la France pour maintenir sa force armée au niveau de sa sécurité,"⁴⁴ led French Communists to vote for bills of national

defense for the first time, removing the last major obstacle to the consummation of the Popular Front. That abrupt switches in French Communist policy did occur in these years is not to be denied, but these as often as not can be ascribed to a greater willingness and ability to manoeuver tactically on the part of the highly centralized and very aggressive Communist party, rather than to its acting as a slavish instrument of Soviet foreign policy. This, at any rate, is the view of Georges Dupeux^{4 5}.

Tension between the PC and the SFIO had reached its height in 1932. Violent Communist criticism of "Social-Fascist" Socialist leadership and the Communist attempts to rob the Socialists of their militants through the policy of a "front unique à la base" led to considerable friction between the two parties. Thorez characterized the position of his party toward the SFIO in the following terms in March of that year...

"Pour l'oeuvre de répression, la bourgeoisie et son gouvernement disposent dans tous les pays de l'appui entier de leurs différents partis, y compris les partis socialistes ... Il faut porter le coup principal contre les partis dits de gauche, et particulièrement contre le parti socialiste, dont la tâche

est de freiner la poussée des masses. Si l'on ne comprend pas cela, on n'a rien compris de l'ABC du communisme, on est atteint de crétinisme parlementaire."⁴⁶

This policy of "front unique à la base" was completely lacking in positive results and in September the party was harshly criticized by the Communist International. It therefore modified its tactics, offering to hold joint meetings with the Socialists to debate the issue of unity. This came to nought, owing to the legitimate suspicions of the Socialists that these joint meetings would prove to be a continuation of previous efforts to raid the SFIO of its membership.

The rise to power of Hitler, and the sterile hostility of the German parties of the Left toward one another in the period immediately preceding the Nazi revolution, led both Communists and Socialists in France to rethink their own positions. In February 1933, the Socialist International meeting in Zurich issued an appeal for a common front against fascism. This was answered March 3 by the Communist International which called for a joint struggle by Communist and Socialist

workers, a front unique, this time, significantly enough, to be achieved "par l'intermédiaire des partis socialistes". Fascism was to be stopped in any attempted coup de'état by the organization of strikes and demonstrations. If the Socialists accepted this unity of action, the Communists would show their good faith by stopping their violent attacks on Socialist leadership. However the formula of "front unique à la base", with committees of action to be organized on the level of local organizations and factories, raised the spectre of the PC using this as a means of infiltrating and despoiling the Socialist organization. Again, nothing came of the Communist initiative, but plainly circumstances were pushing them closer to a position which the Socialist could accept as a basis for a common front against fascism. After a delay of several weeks, the SFIO announced that only an accord on the level of the two Internationals would be acceptable to them, thereby bringing discussion to a halt.

Thus, relations between the two parties remained less than cordial for the remainder of the year. The Rightist riots of February 6, 1934 on the occasion of the dismissal of Jean Chiappe were a turning point in French

political history and more than any other single factor, were responsible for the birth of the Popular Front. Communists and Socialists saw for the first time that fascism perhaps was becoming a real menace in France. The leadership of the two parties took some time to realize the depth of the fear of fascism in their own parties and the resultant desire for unity of the Left. Indicative of the new current of opinion after February 6 was the abortive effort of the Communist, Jacques Doriot, the Socialist, Georges Monnet, and the Radical, Gaston Bergery to form a "front commun contre le fascisme" outside the framework of the parties. So too was the formation of the Comité d'Action antifasciste et de vigilance by Rivet (a friend of the Socialists), Langevin (a Communist sympathizer) and Alain (the theorist of radicalism) which soon attracted numerous intellectuals of the Left. Although the expulsion of Doriot from the PC in May 1934 seemed to indicate that the Communists had given up all thought of collaboration with the Socialists, this was not at all the case. Doriot was expelled because he had broken party discipline, and not for the first time. His rebellion may even have

been the factor that induced the Communist party to realize the strength of the desire for unity in its own ranks.

On May 31, 1934, Pravda published an article urging the necessity for unity with the Socialists against Fascism in France. The article, reproduced in Humanité, ended with the following warning - "On commettrait un crime à l'égard de la classe ouvrière, non seulement en s'opposant à ce désir de front unique, mais en la sous-estimant même."⁴⁷ On the same day and on June 5 the Central Committee of the PC invited the Socialist party, and not merely its membership and supporters, to associate itself with them in a demonstration protesting Nazi treatment of political prisoners. The modified Communist attitude was reaffirmed at the National Congress at Ivry, later in the month. The Socialists, worried by the continued appearance of attacks against their leaders⁴⁸, showed themselves to be reticent, and once even broke off the negotiations which had begun on June 11. On July 2, orators from the PC and the Left wing of the SFIO held immensely successful joint meetings calling for the liberation of Thaelmann and Paula Walisch. Several days later a counter-manifestation against the Croix de Feu attracted an estimated 100,000

persons to the Bois de Vincennes.

The impression made on the Socialist leaders by the enthusiasm of their followers for these common demonstrations, led them to overcome their anxieties regarding co-operation with the PC and on July 27, 1934, the pact for unity of action was signed. This pact envisaged the formation of a committee of co-ordination to regulate joint action and settle differences between the two parties and it engaged each party to refrain from criticizing the other during the period of co-operation.

Although the pact was in no sense an electoral alliance, the spirit of concord it engendered was reflected in the co-operation of PC and SFIO candidates in the cantonal elections of 1934 to the profit of both parties and to the detriment of the centre parties. The fact that the Right also made advances led Thorez to exclaim; "Entre les fascistes et nous, prolétaires révolutionnaires, la course de vitesse a commencé pour la conquête des classes moyennes."⁴⁸ This would seem to indicate that the Communists were already looking beyond the working class for their antifascist troops, and suggests a rapprochement with the Radicals in the foreseeable future.

Meanwhile, the Communists had already suggested a unification of the Communist-led CGTU (Confédération générale du travail unitaire) labour union and the independent, reformist CGT (Confédération générale du travail). Again, they first attempted the tactic of uniting the two organizations on a local level, without any previous agreement with the hierarchy. The CGT balked, fearing that this would lose them members to the younger, more dynamic Communist syndicate. In spite of CGT resistance the CGTU managed to steal some of the former's membership through this appeal for unity, and the CGT in its turn began to realize the desire of the working class for unity.

Although for a considerable period after signing of the pact for unity of action, almost nothing was achieved, either in elaborating a programme or in organizing local Popular Front committees, the communal elections of May 1935 showed that Communist-Socialist co-operation gained votes for both. The election was a unquestioned victory for the two parties of the extreme Left, and a defeat for the extreme Right (in relative terms). In some electoral districts, as in Paris' 5th Arrondissement,

even Radical candidates desisted before the second round of voting in favour of the Frontist candidate. In most cases, however, and particularly in rural communes, Flandin's Minister of the Interior, Marcel Régnier, tried to see to it that Radical desistments were made in favour of the moderate Right parties.

After the communal elections, the Communists began to demonstrate affection for the Radicals as well as for the SFIO. Thorez, writing in Humanité, called the Radicals: "... le plus grande des partis. C'est celui qui exerce la plus grande influence sur la vie politique du pays. Dans ses rangs et derrière ses comités se trouve la masse des petites gens des classes moyennes que la crise économique frappe durement ... Le Français moyen, d'opinion radicale, se débat comme nous, prolétaires communistes et socialistes, contre la misère envahissante."⁵⁰ At the end of May the PC and the SFIO invited the other parties of the Left, including the Radicals, to join them at a meeting on May 31, and the Radicals accepted.

Ever since the formation of the Doumergue government of national union following the Stavisky scandal and the Right-wing riots of February 6, a certain number

of Radicals had been increasingly unhappy with their party's participation in cabinets oriented to the Right. Indicative of the curiously ambivalent attitude of the Radicals towards the participation in rightist coalitions to which they were in principle opposed, is the following remark ascribed to the rather conservative president of the party (but who was also a member of the Society of the Friends of the Soviet Union), Edouard Herriot, at the moment when he was about to enter Doumergue's government as vice-premier: "Il faut que je retourne en prison".⁵¹ The Radicals preferred to link themselves with the Left by sentiment, but their belief in sound finances drove them to the Right. Any re-orientation of the Radical party to the Left now would mean joining hands not only with the socialists as in the past but with the Communists as well.⁵² This, of course, was realized by the Radicals immediately after the signing of the PC-SFIO joint action pact in mid-1934, but their reaction had been far from unanimous. The party had three possible choices; (a) alliance with the Left, favoured by young Radicals like Jean Zay, Pierre Cot, and Gabriel Cudenet; (b) alliance with the Right, which had no conspicuous defenders; and

(c) formation of a Third Party composed of Radicals, Républicains de gauche, démocrates-sociaux, neo-socialists which would be situated between the "bloc socialiste-communiste" and the "bloc des droites", as urged by Émile Roche. The fall of the Flandin ministry on May 31, 1935, marked the failure of the Third Party conception, for Flandin's support had come from just this sort of majority. This was no doubt the reason why the Radicals had agreed to attend the meeting of the re-constituted pre-War "délégation des gauches" shortly before, at the invitation of the SFIO and the PC. As the legislative elections of early 1936 approached, the Radicals grew increasingly warm in their relations with the Left and began to talk of a "rassemblement populaire". On the 14th of July, 1935, Bastille Day, the Radicals - represented by the leader of their Left wing - Édouard Daladier, participated with Socialists and Communists in a mammoth parade of some 500,000 Parisians organized by a tri-partite "Comité du Rassemblement populaire". Even Herriot gave his reserved acquiescence to this demonstration of solidarity with the Left. The Committee remained in existence and began the task of working out a common programme, finally

completed in January, 1936.

The policies of the Laval government formed on June, 1935, after Flandin's fall, were highly unpopular with the Radical party which was nonetheless an element of that government. The Radicals remained in the government largely because there was no logical alternative until the "rassemblement populaire" had been definitively constituted. In the view of François Goguel⁵³, the obvious failure of the deflation experiment convinced a number of Radicals that the much more daring (and electorally popular) projects of the Socialists ought to be attempted, and this was a major factor in their definitive adhesion to the Popular Front, as the "rassemblement populaire" came to be known. Another factor was certainly their disgust with Laval's foreign policy, his obvious sympathy for Mussolini in the latter's attempt to subdue Ethiopia, translated into action with the abortive Hoare-Laval agreement of mid-December 1935. Finally on January 19th, 1936, just over a week after the programme of the "Rassemblement populaire" was complete and made public, the executive committee of the Radical party elected Daladier president in place of Herriot and on the 22nd,

Herriot and the other Radical ministers resigned since the greater part of the party now opposed the government. The lines were now more firmly drawn than ever between the Left and the Right in the French parliament, and as we shall see, in the electoral campaign that followed and in the next twelve months of Popular Front government, each fought the other without restraint.

Footnotes to Chapter 1.

1. GOGUEL, F; La politique des partis sous la IIIe République, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1946, p. 17.
2. RÉMOND, R.; The Right Wing in France From 1815 to de Gaulle, tr. J. M. Laux, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966.
3. VALLAT, X.; Le Nez de Cléopâtre. Souvenirs d'un Homme de droite (1919-1944), avec une préface de Charles Maurras, Paris, Les Quatre Fils Aymon, 1957.
4. GENET, L.; "La France au XXe siècle," Histoire de la France, ed. Marcel Reinhard, Paris, Larousse, 1954, new ed., 1964, vol. 2, page.456.
5. RÉMOND, R.; op. cit., pp. 273-285, 365, 381.
6. PLUMYÈNE, J., and LASIERRA, R.; Les fascismes Français, 1923-1963, Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 1963, pp. 7-11 for the best exposition of this point of view.
7. VALLAT; op. cit., pp. 140-160.
8. DANOS, J., and GIBELIN, M.; Juin '36, preface by Edouard Dolleans, Paris, Les Editions Ouvrieres, 1952, p. 279.
9. SOUCY, R.J.; "The Nature of Fascism in France," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. I(1966), p. 32.
10. PLUMYÈNE, J., and LASIERRA, R.; op. cit., pp. 130-136.
11. MAXENCE, J.P.; Histoire de dix ans, 1927-1937, Paris, Gallimard, 1939, pp. 220-226, 324.
12. Ibid., p. 306.
13. Cited in R. GIRARDET; "Introduction à l'étude du nationalisme français," Revue française de Science Politique, vol. 8, (1958), pp. 531-532.
14. MAXENCE; op. cit., p. 216

15. E. Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, Action française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966, pp. 20-21.
16. PLUMYENE and LASIERRA, loc. cit., explain that Doriot lost his working-class support in Saint-Denis, to have it replaced with that of provincial bourgeois.
17. S. M. LIPSET, Political Man, Garden City, Doubleday, 1959, Soucy, op. cit., pp. 37-39, and E. Weber, "The Right in France: A working Hypothesis," American Historical Review Vol. 65, no. 3 (April 1960), says that Bonapartists are merely frightened Orleanists, p. 564, and he adds: "The nationalists, who represent the dissatisfied, the ambitious and the disinherited, have a doctrine. The conservatives have none; most of the time accepting the status quo and busy making the best of it, they feel no need for one. Only when the status quo begins to crack and crumble so dangerously that the usual patches grow useless and they realize something must be done, do the conservatives begin to cast around for a doctrine. Then, like hermit crabs, they often try to fit into someone else's," p. 567.
18. GOGUEL, op. cit., p. 19.
19. This is the name which is commonly used when referring to the Republican Radical and Radical-Socialist party.
20. André SIEGFRIED; Tableau des partis en France, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1930, p. 89.
21. P. LARMOUR; The Fate of the French Radical Party in the 1930's, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1964, p. 99.
22. Ibid., p. 48
23. Ibid., pp. 47-49. See also GOGUEL, op. cit., p. 519.
24. J. T. MARCUS; French Socialism in the Crisis Years, 1933-1936, Fascism and the French Left, New York Praeger, 1958, pp. 30-37.

25. C. AUDRY, Léon Blum, ou la politique du juste, Paris, Julliard, 1955, pp. 77-79.
26. cf. P. ALPERT, Twentieth Century Economic History of Europe, New York, Schuman, 1951, and my chart p. below.
27. H. TINT, The Decline of French Patriotism, 1870-1940, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964, p. 186, and Alpert, op. cit., p. 142.
28. J. CHASTENET, Histoire de la Troisième République, tome 6: Déclin de la Troisième (1931-1938), Paris, Hachette, 1962, p. 36. According to Chastenet, the Radicals were somewhat less than eager to govern with the SFIO in any case.
29. MARCUS, op. cit., pp. 37-40.
30. See d. GUÉRIN, Front Populaire, révolution manquée. Témoignage, Paris, Julliard, 1963, pp. 35, 40. Guerin, a member of the Left wing of the SFIO at the time, makes this quite clear.
31. MARCUS, op. cit., p. 141.
32. BELOFF seems to think that this was indeed^a premeditated fascist attempt. See M. BELOFF, "The Sixth of February," in The Decline of the Third Republic, ed. J. Joll, London, Chatto & Windus, 1959, pp. 9-35; for an exposition of the opposite point of view, see Chastenet, op. cit., pp. 77-79.
33. J. FAUVET, Histoire du Parti communiste français, tome 1: De la guerre à la guerre, 1917-1939, Paris, Fayard, 1964, p. 169. See also Tint, op. cit., p. 201.
34. MERCIER was head of an important French electrical trust and was a champion of technocracy.
35. Quoted in DANOS and GIBELIN, op. cit., page 43.
36. LARMOUR, op. cit., pp. 145-146. For a discussion of the fate of European liberalism in the 1930's, see M. Beaumont, La faillite de la paix, tome 2; De l'affaire éthiopienne à la guerre (1936-1939), Paris, PUF, 1945, new ed., 1961, pp. 554-558.

37. See GENET, Op. cit., p. 456 and G. DUPEUX, Le Front populaire et les élections de 1936, Paris, Armand Colin, 1959, pp. 32-42, 61, for the statistics cited. For other evaluations of the deflation policy, refer to Chastenet, op. cit., pp. 95, 116, 125, and Goguel, op. cit., p. 341.
38. GOGUEL, op. cit., p. 499.
39. WEBER, Action Française, p. 361
40. VALLAT, op. cit., p. 140. A member of the 'Croix de Feu' himself, Vallat claims that in the Chamber of 1936, 47 deputies were affiliated with the league, which claimed a total membership of 750,000. This estimate is modest compared with some.
41. See TINT, op. cit., and MICAUD, op. cit., two works which attempt to explain this curious phenomenon.
42. CHASTENET, op. cit., p. 97
43. It should be noted that the Comintern and Stalin adopted the ideal of the Popular Front only after it had begun to be put into practice in France, according to the evidence advanced by S. T. Possony, "The Comintern as an Instrument of Soviet Strategy," in M.M. Drachkovitch (ed.) The Revolutionary International, 1864-1963, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1966, p. 219. "By October 1934, the Comintern had at last changed its line; the French party had already veered strongly toward a united 'anti-fascist' front... At the Sixth Congress of the Socialist Unity Party in Germany, in 1963, entirely forgetting that in earlier years he himself had opposed the policy of 'primitive anti-fascism', Ulbricht made a partial disclosure of the truth. He averred that together with Georgi Dimitrov, Maurice Thorez, Palmiro Togliatti, Klement Gottwald, Harry Pollit, and Wilhelm Pieck, he had worked for a policy of a United Front against Hitler, but that he had encountered the resistance of prominent Communist leaders. No doubt, the main resistance came from Stalin", See G. Walter, Histoire du parti communiste français,

Paris, Aimery Somogy, 1948, pp. 55, 58, 82, 286-287, and Fauvet pp. 80, 194-196, for further indications that the French PC was more independent than has been assumed by R. D. Brower, "The French Communist and the Popular Front, 1934-1938", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1963, and for indications that the party had been genuinely interested in coming to an agreement with the SFIO for some years.

44. FAUVET, op. cit., p. 161
45. See DUPEUX, op. cit.
46. M. THOREZ, Oeuvres, livre II tome 3, Paris, Editions Sociales, 1950, pp. 54, cited in Dupeux, op. cit., pp. 68-95.
47. Cited in Fauvet, op. cit., pp. 143.
48. André MARTY, as late as January 1936 was still unable to hold back an occasional tirade against the SFIO, party line or no party line.
49. THOREZ, op. cit., p. 64.
50. HUMANITÉ, 30 June 1935, cited in Fauvet, op. cit., p. 1964.
51. Cited in Dupeux, op. cit., p. 58.
52. Le Temps had been quick to point this out. "Le cartel à deux [the SFIO and Radicals] appartient au passé; il n'y a plus de place aujourd'hui que pour un cartel tripartite qui embrasserait d'une part les cellules et gardes rouges, et d'autre part dignitaires chevronnés de la rue de Valois [the address of the headquarters of the Radical party]. "Le Temps, 7 July 1934.
53. GOGUEL, Op. cit., p. 341

C H A P T E R T W O

The Sarraut Interlude and the Elections

The publication of the programme of the Popular Front in early January of 1936 marked the successful climax of months of interparty negotiations on the Left. The programme was to serve as the electoral manifesto of the parties associated with the Popular Front, and it was therefore, in a sense, the opening gun of the electoral campaign. For these reasons, then, early January 1936 is also the point which I have chosen to begin my analysis of Le Temps' attitude toward the Popular Front.

The common programme of the Popular Front was finally made public January 10th, 1936, in outline form. It was divided into two sections; the first dealing with political questions, the second with economic matters. The political section envisaged measures providing for a general amnesty of political prisoners, dissolution of paramilitary formations, reform of the press laws, the right to union membership, the increase of school-leaving age to 14 and complete freedom of conscience for teachers as well as the formation of a commission of inquiry into the situation in the colonies. Pious reference was made to peace and disarmament. It was promised that

war industries would be nationalized and private commerce in armaments suppressed. In the section of the programme dealing with economic matters an unemployment insurance fund, old age pensions, a reduction in the work week without any reduction in weekly pay, enlarged public works measures, a national Wheat Board, an expansion of credit, and finally a semi-nationalization of the Bank of France were promised.¹ It is to the influence of the PC and the Radical party in the Popular Front Committee that responsibility for the lack of structural reforms in the programme must be attributed. The SFIO had urged numerous nationalizations but was forced to be content with those of the arms industry and the Bank of France.² Nevertheless, Le Temps' reaction was dismay.

"Il suffit de les [the chapter headings of the programme] parcourir pour reconnaître l'influence profonde du marxisme et de l'étatisme dans ces projets, dont la réalisation servirait de préface à une période révolutionnaire et mettrait le régime en péril." ³

While Le Temps was not mistaken in divining a Marxist inspiration in the philosophy of increasing the workers'

buying power by giving them a greater share of the surplus-value of goods produced, the programme as a whole was conceived with the goal of re-envigorating the capitalist economy, rather than destroying it.⁴ The programme owed its moderation to the fact it was "conçu dans le but d'attirer au front anti-fasciste les classes moyennes"⁵ and there was little in it that had not been passed in the form of a resolution at one Radical party congress or another.

Le Temps left no doubt in anyone's mind as to its feelings towards the programme, characterizing it as frightening in its demagogery, banal in its clichés.⁶ The proper programme was that of the Right, the programme then being implemented by Laval.

"Le programme des républicains nationaux⁷ n'est pas à établir, puisqu'il l'est depuis longtemps, et qu'il se trouve en voie de réalisation. On le trouverait tout entier compris dans les déclarations ministérielles les plus récentes et aussi dans les actes du gouvernement."⁸

Laval's government of inter-party truce or National Union (a coalition of the Right with the Radical party) had been badly shaken before Christmas on a foreign

policy debate, but Le Temps felt that M. Laval's position had improved by January 14th. The following three issues were devoted to a sort of dialogue with the Radicals, urging them to ignore the sophistries of the SFIO and maintain the government of National Union. Indeed, a number of Le Temps' editorials were directed at the Radicals, alternately cajoling and reprimanding, enumerating reasons why the Radicals should desert the Popular Front.

Hence, Le Temps was highly indignant when the Left wing of the Radical party, led by Daladier, engineered the defeat of Laval's government on January 22nd. Foreseeing the turn of events on January 19th, Le Temps severely criticized the dissident majority of the Radical party ... "Ce n'est plus un parti ni un club qui ordonne, qui menace et qui condamne; c'est un morceau de club, c'est une fraction de parti."⁹ In addition, by deciding the fate of the now defunct government in caucus, the Radicals made a travesty of parliamentary procedure. "Les chefs du parti radical ont provoqué la crise. Ils l'ont fait en marge du Parlement, hors des règles constitutionnelles."¹⁰

Now that the Radicals had purified their electoral image by removing their compromising support from the Laval

government, one of their number, Senator Albert Sarraut, formed a caretaker government to see the country through the elections. The equivocal position of the Sarraut Ministry, which hoped to draw its support both from the moderate Right and the extreme Left was pointed out by Le Temps on January 28th, which still hoped that the ministerial declaration would make it impossible for the SFIO to support Sarraut.

"Dans le cas présent, la concentration réalisé par M. Albert Sarraut semble devoir impliquer, notamment, une politique opposée à celle du 'Front populaire'. Cependant, le 'Front populaire' ne semble pas décidé à combattre le cabinet Albert Sarraut; il met seulement à l'octroi de son 'préjugé favorable' quelques conditions."¹¹

In fact, Sarraut did manage to obtain wide parliamentary support (including that of the SFIO) for a policy which did not differ substantially from that of Laval, in economic matters at least. Nevertheless, the fact that the government was dependent on the SFIO for a part of its support led Le Temps to imply that it would be subject to pressure from the Left to favour the Popular Front parties in the pre-electoral period, as well as the

policies that they proposed.

"Ainsi le gouvernement n'a pas la politique de sa majorité, et la majorité n'a pas la politique de son gouvernement. La majorité n'a pas cette politique, mais elle entend bien faire prévaloir la sienne, aussi bien en ce qui concerne 'l'ordre républicain' que les finances, que l'économie, que la politique extérieure."¹²

With the uncertainties of the period of cabinet crises over, Le Temps turned its attention to the forthcoming debate in the Chamber on electoral reform. The electoral system in force was that of single-member constituencies with elections taking place in two rounds, spaced at a week's interval. If no one candidate obtained an absolute majority in the first round, then a run-off election was held in which a simple majority sufficed to elect a candidate. Since there were ordinarily a considerable number of hopeful candidates presenting themselves in each constituency (candidates of various leftist nuances being most numerous), in most cases it was necessary to have recourse to the run-off vote. This ordinarily led to the formation of electoral alliances (among parties

sharing similar views) in which the candidate on the Left with the most votes in the first round benefitted from the withdrawal of less favoured candidates on the Left (until 1936, the PC refused to participate in such alliances, to its own detriment), and less successful candidates on the Right also withdrawing in favour of whichever Rightist seemed likely to gather the most votes. With the formation of the Popular Front, which provided for absolute discipline on the Left among Radicals, Communists, Socialists and the other diverse minor Leftist parties, the technique of the electoral alliance seemed likely to work with unprecedented efficiency to the disadvantage of the Right.

The proposed alternative to the electoral system outlined above was a bill presented by the SFIO which sought to introduce a system of straight proportional representation, and thus ensure that the distribution of seats in the Chamber would be the exact reflection of the proportion of votes garnered by each party. The Radical party, being near the centre of the political spectrum, had always profited most from the old electoral system, so that many of its members opposed reform. In addition,

the electoral alliance served as a cement to bind the elements of the Popular Front together and if proportional representation were adopted, this cement would no longer be present. In 1936, the Radicals found themselves in a position where they had to support the reformist program of the Popular Front or admit that they no longer belonged on the French Left,¹³ therefore the Left wing of the party was determined to preserve the old electoral system which bound them to the Popular Front.

Whereas the Socialists supported proportional representation as a matter of principle, Le Temps and Rightist deputies supported it because they hoped that in restoring the Radical party's electoral independence from the Left, proportional representation would end the Radicals' political flirtation with the Left.

"Il est encore temps pour lui [The Radical party] d'assurer son indépendance, de sauvegarder ses positions électorales tout en redevenant un parti de gouvernement et un parti national. Le débat sur la réforme électorale qui s'ouvre demain devant la Chambre lui donne une dernière occasion d'accomplir ce rétablissement."¹⁴

The Radical party, affirmed Le Temps, is really a party of the Right and it would be in the interest of the nation if they were to admit this.

"Il faut, à tout prix, que les partis restent ce qu'ils sont devant les électeurs et à la Chambre, il faut renoncer aux alliances équivoques des élections, et il n'y a pas d'autre méthode, pour y parvenir, que celle de la représentation proportionnelle."¹⁵

The Radicals, however, had no intention of conforming to the wishful thinking of Le Temps, for on February 9th it was learned that they had prepared 16 counter-projects and 150 amendments with which to block the passage of proportional representation. Necessarily so, for the majority of the deputies seemed prepared to support electoral reform, and on February 14th, Le Temps noted with satisfaction that the SFIO had decided to vote as a bloc in favour of it. Le Temps even rather speciously attributed ministerial instability to the current electoral system in its effort to assemble arguments in favour of proportional representation.

"L'instabilité ministérielle, surtout, est passée, de maladie chronique qu'elle était, à l'état de maladie aiguë, détraquant grave-

ment le mécanisme du régime, agissant catastrophiquement sur le crédit de l'Etat, infligeant de redoutables coups à la politique extérieure. La réforme électorale est notamment destinée à juguler ce mal reconnu de tous."¹⁶

The importance the Le Temps attributed to reform may be seen from the fact that it devoted twenty editorials to the question between February 4th, and March 7th, on which date the filibuster of the opponents of reform ended in success.

Meanwhile, outside the confines of the Palais-Bourbon, political partisanship was taking on rather extreme forms. On February 13th, Leon Blum was brutally attacked and beaten in the street by some youthful members of the Royalist Action Française League, which was, in consequence, dissolved by cabinet decree by virtue of a law passed under Laval. Le Temps, while expressing its disapproval of such violence, nevertheless felt that the affair should have been dealt with in the courts rather than by administrative action... "Demain, bientôt, à la suite d'incidents peut-être moins répréhensibles que celui d'hier, quelle association pourrait se flatter d'échapper aux rigueurs

d'une loi dont le gouvernement peut s'armer à sa guise?"¹⁷

On the 16th a huge demonstration of solidarity with Blum was held in the Place de la Bastille - over half a million people were present.¹⁸ Le Temps attempted to argue that the demonstration was illegal, since it doubted that permission to hold an outdoor meeting had been obtained three days in advance, as required by the law. The Laval government was overthrown by the Popular Front, in the opinion of Le Temps, because Laval was thought to have favoured fascist demonstrations. Yet the Popular Front was pushing the supposedly neutral Sarraut government to allow the Left to hold its own illegal demonstrations.¹⁹ That Le Temps used the Rightist attack on Blum's life as a pretext to attack the Popular Front is surely a measure of its dislike for that coalition and perhaps of its sympathy for the leagues as well. During the month of February, we find several further editorials accusing the Sarraut government of condoning Popular Front violence while repressing Rightist disturbers of the peace.²⁰

Another element in the consolidation of the strength of the Popular Front was the fusion of France's

two major unions, the CGT and the Communist CGTU (both member organizations of the Popular Front), formalized at a joint Congress held in Toulouse from March 2nd to 6th, 1936. Although the merger was agreed to only reluctantly by the leadership of the much larger CGT²¹, the effect on the rank and file was galvanizing -- union membership began to increase rapidly and the self-confidence of the working class was stimulated.²² Le Temps argued that this was merely a new tactic designed by the Communists to gain control of the French union movement (Le Temps, as we shall see, habitually interpreted any action on the part of the Communists as pure machiavellian cynicism) and that this would mean an increasingly political role for the new unified CGT...

"Elle [the CGT] participe au Rassemblement populaire, qui est une formation politique. Elle intervient dans les élections... L'action du syndicalisme ne se conçoit plus en dehors du jeu de partis, des campagnes électorales, de la conquête du parlement et de l'administration."²³

From February 11th to 27th, the French Chamber of Deputies was engaged in debating the ratification of the

Franco-Soviet mutual assistance treaty. Le Temps, however, for reasons best known to its editors, devoted not a word to the debate, in which the majority of the Right opposed ratification. René Rémond dates a significant growth in the strength of pacifism on the Right from this debate,²⁴ and while Le Temps was hardly pacifist at this point, its attitude with regard to the lines along which French foreign affairs ought to be conducted was nothing if not vague. During the crises following the German denunciation of the Treaty of Locarno and remilitarization of the Rhineland, Le Temps for once seems to have few suggestions to offer. "Les évènements doivent donc être suivis, sans rien préjugé, avec le plus grand soin, étudié avec le plus grand impartialité. Ils seront déterminants."²⁵ France, in the light of the Rhineland crises, must work for the organization of the peace by developing a solid alliance system of which the Franco-Soviet pact was an element.²⁶ Yet the general impression which the editorials of these critical days gave was of an essentially defensive reaction. Le Temps called for peace and national union, a national union which excluded the Marxists. "Mandataires d'une nation sage et résolue, les parlementaires républicains

doivent désavouer promptement quiconque n'a travaillé jusqu'ici qu'à jeter le désordre dans leurs rangs."²⁷

This may essentially be interpreted as an appeal to the Radicals to give up their Socialist and Communist friends to return to a majority of national union.

With the waning of the period of tension following Hitler's Rhineland coup, Le Temps devoted virtually all its editorials in late March and April to issues arising from the election campaign. During the campaign Le Temps spent the better part of its energy denouncing the alliance of the Radical party with the two Marxist internationals (or rather their French sections, the SFIO and the PC). The Radicals, by virtue of this alliance stood to lose their position as a party of government, in the estimation of Le Temps, to become a party of revolution, consummating the division of the country into two cohesive blocs; the republican nationalist bloc and the revolutionary bloc. While it was regrettable that the Radicals should have chosen to lend their support to the revolutionary bloc, Le Temps urged that for the time being the parties of the Right take the enmity of the Radicals for granted and act accordingly.

"Dans le camp du 'Rassemblement populaire' on conspire contre les libertés républicains en feignant de les défendre. Il ne serait pour les républicains patriots que de s'entendre d'abord entre eux pour que fut déjouée la conspiration électorale des révolutionnaires et des auxiliaires qu'ils se sont ajoints."²⁸

This could only be done if there are as few abstentions as possible among Rightist voters (whom Le Temps accuses of being habitual abstainers).²⁹ On April 26th, amid the most dire predictions about the catastrophes that would follow a Popular Front victory, Le Temps warned conservative voters not to throw their votes away on extremists, nor to allow their disgust with politics to prevent them from voting, for either course would be tantamount to treason. A third and most important measure to combat the Popular Front electorally was strongly urged. General and local agreements between the various parties of the Right must be worked out, with a view to presenting a single candidate in the run-off elections.³⁰ The parties of the Right had worked together for two years in government. Why shouldn't they be able to collaborate electorally?

"En réalité il n'y a plus qu'un seul parti de gauche, [the Radicals] et ce parti unique se confonde avec l'extrême gauche; il faut que sur le terrain électoral, il n'y a qu'un seul parti anti-cartelliste. Il faut en finir avec ces compétitions de nuance à nuance, de groupement à groupement, de personnalité à personnalité, qui sont trop souvent la plaie de la politique dite 'modérée' dans les circonscriptions."³¹

If Le Temps made no distinction between the parties of the Right in making its recommendations to voters, nor did it distinguish between the Communists and the Socialists. Both were lumped together as Marxists, extremists or revolutionaries. The feelings of Le Temps towards the Radical party were somewhat more ambivalent, and the newspaper's disapproval of the party was contingent on the continued adherence of the Radicals to the Popular Front. The Radical programme (whatever that was, and it may be argued that being 'a group of politicians masquerading as a party',³² the Radicals had no common programme), affirmed Le Temps, was being put aside in favour of an alliance with the revolutionaries. The Radicals, more concerned with electoral tactics than with the well-being of France,

were ignoring the lessons which the past ought to have taught them about the risks of allying themselves with the extreme Left.

"C'est tout le résultat de quatres années passées d'abord à commettre des erreurs, puis de les réparer. Onze ministères ont eu la charge d'améliorer les affaires du pays; les six premiers n'y ont pu réussir, les révolutionnaires de leur majorité parlementaire [the SFIO] les en empêchant. Les derniers ont fait tout le bien possible, malgré l'opposition du cartel malfaisant. Et quand cette leçon est donnée, quand cette preuve est administrée, on en revient à l'erreur première. Mai 1932 le cartel triomphe; mars 1936, le cartel se re-constitue."³³

The alliance of the Radicals with the extreme Left was an unnatural one, maintained Le Temps on April 7th, and the assertion of certain Radicals that only the Popular Front stood in defence of the Republic was false. Rather, it argued, there were a number of republican parties who logically ought to work together to oppose the two anti-republican forces; the fascists, if such

existed, and the revolutionary Left (the SFIO and the PC) which constituted a menace to liberty and property. The necessary pre-requisite for effective action by republican forces was the co-operation of the Radical republicans.³⁴

As pointed out earlier, the editorials often seem to take the form of a great debate with the Radical party, and an effort was made to demonstrate the basic incompatibility of the Radicals with the other elements of the Popular Front, the consequences of the victory of the alliance being described in the blackest terms. The victory of the Popular Front, made possible by the folly and complacency of the Radicals, would mean war externally, and violence and economic disaster internally.

To vote for the Popular Front is to vote for holy war against Hitler and Mussolini, who have angered the Marxist internationals by destroying the revolutionary parties in their countries, we are told.³⁵ During mid-April the League of Nations was engaged in a debate on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, and Léon Blum, commenting on the debate in the Socialist newspaper Le Populaire, argued that Germany and Italy were undermining international order and the League of Nations and he concluded.

"Si l'Angleterre, la Russie soviétique et la France agissent de concert contre ces deux dangers, la communauté européenne retrouvera aussitôt son efficacité; pour demain comme pour aujourd'hui, la paix sera sauvée."³⁶ Le Temps qualified this as bellicosity and argued that what Blum wanted was a holy alliance of peoples against dictatorships to achieve universal revolution, an alliance formed in the name of democracy and collective security, but for the profit of the two internationals.³⁷

Although there had been a slight amelioration of the economic picture in France by early 1936 (as in the rest of the world), Georges Dupeux asserts that the public was not yet aware of this by the time of the election campaign.³⁸ To give substance to his assertions, he quotes reports of the Bank of France, the Journée industrielle (the newspaper of the metallurgical industry) and various ministerial pronouncements. This would mean, of course, that the Right and its newspapers would be unable to point out an improving economic situation to demonstrate that their deflationary policy had been successful in dealing with the effects of the depression in France. Le Temps certainly did not overburden its

readers with optimistic pictures of France's economic prospects, although it did note once that the financial position of the government seemed to be improving and suggested that it was due to the orthodox methods of the Radical Finance Minister.³⁹ The technical conditions for ending the economic crisis had been fulfilled, it asserted, but not the equally important condition of confidence among investors. Thus, although the economic situation was admitted to be unhealthy, if the Popular Front were to win the elections, the country would be still worse off because confidence would be totally lacking; therefore the wise voter must vote for sound finance and against the Popular Front.⁴⁰

Most stress, however, was laid upon the internal disorders which would follow the Popular Front victory. The Radicals, in their stubborn refusal to see reason, were making a dangerous alliance with revolution, according to Le Temps, as the Spanish example ought to prove. "Et que fera-t-il (The Radical party) lors des succès électoraux qu'il se sera provisoirement assuré en s'engageant dans le 'Front populaire', la France étant en proie de la révolution."⁴¹ In Spain,

the election of a Popular Front majority in February 1936 had been followed by increased violence and strike activity, intensifying this country's usual chronic state of disorder.⁴² Le Temps constantly evoked the Spanish troubles as an example of what was in store for France. On April 4th, the Radicals were enjoined to desert the Popular Front while there was still time. In Spain, an electoral coalition was also formed with a minimum Marxist programme, Le Temps explained, the Radicals reluctantly following in the wake of the Communists and Socialists. Immediately internal troubles broke out ... "notamment des attentats collectifs contre la propriété." In spite of the distaste of M. Azaña, the Radical premier, for illegalism and direct action, he was unable to control these disorders because the government was at the mercy of its Communist and Socialist components. Such is Le Temps' interpretation of the Spanish situation.⁴³ The destiny of all Popular Fronts, declared Le Temps, in France or in Spain, was to inaugurate the dictatorship of the proletariat with the aid of hapless republican parties.⁴⁴ After the elections strikes and violence

would break out. The same causes would bring about the same effects.

"Ici c'est la première phase de leurs opérations, là-bas c'est la seconde. Le Front populaire a remporté en Espagne un succès électoral; aussitôt les révolutionnaires ont exploité leur victoire en organisant des émeutes. D'abord le bulletin de vote; ensuite la torche et le revolver."⁴⁵

In the negotiations surrounding the drawing up of a common programme for the Popular Front, the Communists were unable to win the other parties over to their idea of forming elected local Popular Front committees, for the Radicals and Socialists were afraid that these would fall under Communist control. In Jacques Fauvet's estimation, this failure did much to weaken the effectiveness of the Popular Front.

"Si le parti communiste avait gagné sur le programme, il avait perdu sur l'organisation et cet échec était plus important que ce succès puisqu'il devait altérer la nature populaire du front et en faire assez vite une combinaison parlementaire assez fragile."⁴⁶

As a substitute, appointed committees were formed for the purposes of the election, and Le Temps warned the Radicals that after the elections these would become soviets, that to do this the Communists were using the Radicals for their purposes but would discard them when the time came to transform this extra-parliamentary organization in the country into a dictatorship of the proletariat.⁴⁷ "Le 'Rassemblement populaire' n'a été inventé par les partis révolutionnaires, sous prétexte de défendre la République, que pour servir à la Révolution."⁴⁸ This characteristic declaration was followed by an equally characteristic 'proof' taken from the CGT daily newspaper, Le Peuple, wherein the teacher's union demanded that the Popular Front remain faithful to its programme. If not, it should be subjected to pressure and control from the Popular Front committees; demonstrations should be held; and as a last resort the CGT should take over the direction of affairs from the parties and institute its plan for the economy.⁴⁹ Le Temps used this example to warn the Radicals that they were in league with bolshevist fascism.⁵⁰ Several weeks earlier Le Temps had already admonished the Radicals of the supposed danger in the

adherence of non-parliamentary groups to the Popular Front. If bodies like the 'Ligue des droits de l'homme' and the CGT were to be allowed to participate in the government or even to influence its decisions, this would be the very negation of democratic representation: "... nous en arrivons, disons le mot, au fascisme, à un dictature impersonnelle mais toujours tyrannique,"⁵¹

The tactic of the PC during the election campaign was an unusual one for them. They made a vigorous attempt to reassure the country that they were indeed a respectable party like the others, that they intended to act in the interests of all classes and not merely those of the working class. On April 17th, for the first time ever, the PC was allotted time on a national radio station, and Maurice Thorez's speech aroused a good deal of interest and surprise, particularly as he concluded with his justly famous outstretched hand appeal.

Nous te tendons la main, catholique, ouvrier, employé, paysan, nous qui sommes des laïques, parce que tu es notre frère, et que tu es comme nous accablé par les mêmes soucis.

Nous tendons la main, volontaire national,
ancien combattant devenu croix de feu,
parce que tu es un fils de notre peuple,
que tu souffres comme nous du désordre
et de la corruption, parce que tu veux,
comme nous, éviter que le pays ne glisse
à la ruine et à la catastrophe.⁵²

Thus it was that the Communists, in a marvelous display of effrontery, were making an apparently earnest appeal to those elements of the electorate who were normally their firmest opponents, the electoral clientele of the Right. This rapid switch in tactics, exploded Le Temps, could not and must not be taken as indicative of any change of heart among French Communists, but rather of orders from Moscow. Le Temps then cited L'Oeuvre, a Radical newspaper, which had affirmed that it was the business of the Communists and not of the Radicals if the former wished to moderate their position. Le Temps reacted violently, charging the Radicals with irresponsibility and blindness for their refusal to realize that, as in Spain, the Communists would turn to murder and pillage after the second round of the elections, again on orders from Moscow.⁵³

A further argument which Le Temps developed to demonstrate the temerity of the Radicals in adhering to the Popular Front was that the party had made itself the hostage of the Communists and Socialists. To begin with, by endorsing the programme and signing the pact of the Popular Front, the Radicals assumed a moral obligation to work with the other parties of the alliance.

Les communistes et socialistes sont les initiateurs du 'Rassemblement populaire'. Les radicaux en s'y enrollant, savaient bien quelle discipline ils s'engageaient à subir. Associés aux révolutionnaires ils feront la révolution, ou ils trahiront la lettre et l'esprit du 'contrat' et du 'programme commun'.⁵⁴

Radical voters, warned Le Temps, would take a dim view of their party's bondage to extremism.

Le 'Rassemblement populaire' veut faire dès maintenant du parti radical son otage. Aux électeurs républicains et radicaux qui n'ont oublié ni le doctrine ni le programme de leur parti à réfléchir et à se défendre, même parfois malgré certains de leurs chefs.⁵⁵

Unfortunately for the Radicals, Le Temps continued in a later editorial, they would be doubly hostages after the elections, for the extreme Left seemed likely to do better in the elections than the Radicals, who would have to take a secondary position in a Popular Front government.

Dans une coalition comme celle du 'Rassemblement populaire', les extrémistes l'emportent toujours. Ils l'emportent plus facilement encore qu'ils se trouvent être les plus forts. Le parti radical est le plus faible dans cette alliance rouge, cela n'est pas contestable. Comment ne serait-il pas emporté par ses alliés qui le traitent en auxiliaire dont il est aisé ensuite de se débarrasser!⁵⁶

The tenor of the pre-election editorials in Le Temps had been almost purely defensive. In their efforts to combat the Popular Front, to warn the Radicals and the electors of the likely consequences of a Popular Front victory, they neglected consistently to advance positive arguments in favour of the parties of the Right. This defensive stance was characteristic not only of Le Temps but of the entire Right according to Goguel. "La vigueur et

le dynamisme du Front populaire faisaient un contraste éclatante avec l'incertitude de la droite et du centre."⁵⁷

The first round of the elections took place on April 27th, and the most obvious trend was the marked advance in Communist strength.⁵⁸ The reaction of Le Temps was an outburst of anti-communism. The Communists, it urged, were an internationalist party subject to the orders of Stalin, who was encouraging the PC to take a nationalist and bellicose attitude. Real patriotism does not come from abroad, but consists of the maintenance of peace and order, it continued, and if the PC were to do well in the run-off elections, France would run the risk of internal chaos and external war. The duty of all good republicans was therefore to unite against the threat of the two internationals by voting for those republicans who would be best able to defend the country against revolution, even if their political theories were somewhat 'adventurous'.

Les résultats du vote de dimanche ont un sens clair; la propagande révolutionnaire n'a pas été vaine en France. Dans la marche en avant du 'Front populaire' ce

sont les communistes qui ont gagné du terrain. Toute autre considération est maintenant superflue. Il n'est plus qu'un devoir pour les français qui veulent protéger la patrie de tous les périls auxquels l'expose une politique démagogique et perfide, c'est de s'unir pour former le grand parti de la contrerévolution.⁵⁹

The Radicals were enjoined to detach themselves from the Popular Front and unite with the other republican parties;⁶⁰ the Radical voter was warned that if he wished to avoid a French repetition of Spain's misfortunes, he would have to forgo blind electoral discipline and withdraw his vote from the Popular Front in the run-off elections.⁶¹ Le Temps repeatedly called for that same electoral discipline among Right-wing voters that it fought against on the Left. While deploring the necessity of having to call for discipline on the Right (since this perpetuated the unnatural split in the nation by separating the Radicals from the other republican parties), Le Temps argued that such was the only possible response to the situation created by the Left.⁶²

The run-off elections confirmed the victory of the Popular Front as a whole and it also confirmed Le Temps' prediction that the extreme Left would profit from this victory to a greater extent than the Radicals. The over-all results were as follows:⁶³

<u>Popular Front</u>	<u>Before the Elections</u>	<u>After the Elections</u>	<u>Gains</u>	<u>Losses</u>
Communists	10	72	62	
PUP and dissidents	11	10		1
SFIO	97	146	49	
Union Socialiste Républicaine	45	26		19
Radicals	158	115		43
.				
<u>Opposition</u>				
Gauche Radicale	65	31		34
Indépendants	21	9		12
Républicains de gauche	99	83		16
Démocrates populaires	23	23		
URD	76	88	12	
Conservateurs	6	11	5	

That the Radicals' losses were due to their association with the Popular Front (as Le Temps would have it) is questionable. It has been argued by Debu -Bridel and others that the Radicals had lost much of their appeal to voters because of their apparent corruption and spinelessness at the time of the Stavisky scandal.⁶⁴ Goguel, on the other hand, attributes the losses of the Radicals in the 1936 elections to their continued participation in the deflationary 'Union nationale' ministries of 1934 and 1935. Hence they shared in the defeat of the Right, since their adherence to the Popular Front seemed to be too much a matter of tactics and expediency to be convincing.⁶⁵ If the voters did indeed reject the Radicals and the Right for the same reasons, it ought to be noted that not all elements of the Right shared in this defeat. The extreme Right increased its votes, and one of its representatives, Maxence, was to call the elections of 1936 the end of the moderate Radical republic. Maxence, himself a member of one of the semi-fascist leagues, argued that what the voters were really rejecting was liberal capitalism,⁶⁶ and that

since the extreme Right in France was lacking in dynamism, the majority of the voters had only the choice of voting for the Marxists if they wanted change .

Ainsi, la droite est-elle de plus en plus représentée par une masse de gens bornés, d'excellents intentions, de faible intelligence, de courage plus débile encore, menés et dupés par quelques requins [for example, Flandin]... la masse amorphe des modérés.⁶⁷

While the electoral discipline of the Left in 1936 is well known, that of the Right has passed almost unnoticed,⁶⁸ and is rarely remarked upon. During the election campaign Le Temps had devoted a good deal of space to appeals for discipline on the Right. The elections demonstrated that this appeal had not been in vain. Georges Dupeux, in his excellent study of the elections, has pointed out that in the first round of the elections, only one serious Rightist candidate ran against the candidates of the Popular Front in over 50% of the constituencies. In 84% of the remaining ridings all but one Right-wing candidate withdrew before the run-off election compared with a figure of 86% for the

Left.⁶⁹ The appeal of Le Temps to Radical electors to vote against the two Marxist parties in the run-off election may not have been responsible for what actually transpired the following Sunday.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the fact that numerous Radical voters did turn away from the Popular Front in the run-off election if the withdrawals had favoured a Communist (the rate of defection was 9%) or a Socialist (in this case the rate of defection was only slightly lower, 7.8%)⁷¹ presaged a similar behaviour on the part of Radicals in the legislature as communism came to seem a greater threat than fascism. And as Le Temps was quick to indicate, the two outstanding features of the elections were Radical losses and Communist gains.⁷²

The political consequences of the Popular Front victory rapidly became apparent. Blum, writing in Le Populaire, laid claim to the leadership of the future government for the SFIO, by far the largest party in the new Chamber. "Nous tenons donc à déclarer, sans perdre une heure, que nous sommes prêts à remplir le rôle qui nous appartient, c'est-à-dire à constituer et à

diriger le gouvernement de Front populaire."⁷³ The Communists refused to actively participate in the government, but promised their complete support. The decision of the Communist International in August 1935 had been to allow Communist parties to participate in Popular Front governments if circumstances made this necessary. Immediately following the elections, the Political Bureau of the party met to discuss the question. Thorez, although personally in favour of participation, found himself over-ruled by the other members of the Political Bureau. On May 6th, the decision was made public. Thorez later justified the decision of the Political Bureau in the following terms...

Nous n'estimions pas opportune la présence des communistes dans le gouvernement. Elle serait exploité par les ennemis du peuple; elle servirait de prétexte à des campagnes d'affolement, et risquerait d'amoindrir les forces du Front populaire. Le parti communiste ne demande que le succès de l'entreprise commune. Il ne voulait que l'application du programme.⁷⁴

Indeed, there was every necessity for a concerted attempt to immediately establish and maintain a climate of confidence, to reassure investors of the moderate intentions of the Popular Front, for a financial panic followed on the heels of the election. In one week the Bank of France lost 2.5 billion francs of its gold reserve. The Communists and the Left wing of the SFIO (the Gauche revolutionnaire) demanded that Blum take power immediately to prevent the "200 families",⁷⁵ from preparing their resistance to the Popular Front by draining France of its gold. Blum, in fact, had legally every right to assume office directly, but the established custom was to wait for the reconvening of parliament a month later. Le Temps was indignant at the Communist accusations of a concerted attempt by financiers to foil the Popular Front experiment from the start. Either the Popular Front ought to take power,

...ou bien que cessent les calomnies et les fausses rumeurs accusatrices. Et que les deux partis qui dirigent le 'Rassemblement populaire' accordent leurs violons. Une telle discordance n'est certes pas faite pour restaurer la confiance de la nation en elle-même et dans son avenir.⁷⁶

The discordance was imaginary, for Blum, like the Communists, felt that the financial crisis was directed against the Popular Front, as he made clear in an editorial in Le Populaire the next day. "Personne ne peut douter, pas même Le Temps, que le secousse boursière et monétaire qui secoue en ce moment le marché de Paris n'ait pour objet direct ou indirect d'atteindre la majorité de Front Populaire et le gouvernement qui émanera d'elle."⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Blum believed that it was possible to end the financial crisis by acting in the most reassuring manner possible. It was in order to restore confidence, then, that he chose to keep to republican custom by refraining from assuming the powers of government before the end of the normal time lapse. When Blum was tried by the Vichy government, his testimony was quite explicit on this point "... je tenais, en raison des circonstances, à ce que la transmission du pouvoir s'opérât dans des conditions irréprochables de légalité républicain et de correction constitutionnelle."⁷⁸

In any case, it was still necessary to take some more immediate steps to stop the flight of gold from

the country. As a first step the Bank of France raised its discount rate, but Le Temps felt that only reassuring words from Blum as to his intentions would have the desired appeasing effect.

Ainsi, un peu partout l'équivoque subsiste
--- et tant qu'il ne sera pas dissipée le
malaise continuera à regner. Il dépend de
M. Blum de mettre demain les choses au point.
Ses déclarations, seront-elles, comme il
nous l'annonce, de nature à réaliser 'l'apaise-
ment', c'est-à-dire, en bon français, à
rétablir la confiance? Nous attendons.⁷⁹

On May 10th, speaking before the national council of the SFIO, Blum gave the necessary assurances that the policies which the Popular Front intended to undertake would in no way threaten the interests of French investors. Le Temps, however, was still dissatisfied since Blum had declined to be explicit about his programme. The Popular Front, "... M. Blum l'a solennellement proclamé, n'entend en aucun cas recourir à l'illégalité ni à la violence ... Force nous est, pour le moment, d'attendre à ses actes, ou tout au moins à l'énoncé d'un programme précis et détaillé qui fait encore défaut."⁸⁰

In fact, Blum could scarcely be more precise until he had formed his cabinet, because if he spoke at this point he would be speaking for himself alone and not in the name of a government which did not yet exist. Although the hemorrhage of gold was eventually stopped, Le Temps continued to attack the Popular Front for not presenting a clear, detailed plan of action. It pointed out the conflicting statements which emanated from spokesmen of the various Popular Front parties and surmised that the most violent groups would carry the day and impose their will on Léon Blum and the Radicals.

In the meantime, Blum continued to negotiate with the various member organizations of the Popular Front in an effort to give his government as wide a base of support as possible. However negotiations with both the PC and the CGT were unfruitful. Alexander Werth, a British correspondent in Paris at the time, felt that Blum regretted the CGT refusal to participate in his government, but was relieved at the Communist refusal, for he feared, in Werth's opinion, that their presence might create a bad impression abroad.⁸¹ Blum himself, in an article in Le Populaire

expressed disappointment that the PC and the CGT had chosen to decline his invitation.⁸² Lefranc, however, suggests that Blum had vetoed the presence of the CGT in the government, because of his desire to make his government as respectable and traditional in appearance as possible.⁸³ How then, asked Le Temps, did the CGT intend to co-operate with the government? By technical participation in the diverse organisms of state economic direction such as the National Economic Council? This, argued Le Temps, would simply be a way of infiltrating positions of power in preparation for a take-over. The unions and the PC, it continued, were in reality preparing their opposition to Parliament and universal suffrage. Blum and the Radicals must have the courage to resist such an attempt to install the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁸⁴ From a position of fierce opposition to the Popular Front in all its manifestations and particularly to its Marxist components before the elections, Le Temps had shifted to the role of defending Blum against his allies, all in the space of three weeks.

The participation of the Radicals in the Popular Front government was at no time in doubt. On May 22nd,

the executive committee of the Radical party approved the entry of party members into the cabinet, with little discussion. All the other parties, Le Temps noted, contributed ideas and reservations, but "Les radicaux, eux, ne réservent, n'imposent, ne demandent ni ne critiquent rien. Ils n'ont rien à dire. Placé en second ils secondent, sans plus. Mis à la suite, ils suivent."⁸⁵

Almost forced to participate after their criticism of the SFIO in 1932 for not accepting a share in the responsibility of government, reasoned Le Temps, the Radicals were now the prisoners of the SFIO, just as they had always been submissive to them.⁸⁶

Since the Radicals were now the hostages of the Left, it fell to the parties of the Right to defend the country from the immoderation and disorders to which the Popular Front would soon be subjecting France. The Right had done their best to defeat the Popular Front electorally in a valiant rear-guard action; they might have "... le coeur angoissée mais l'âme sereine, car ils ont tout essayé pour éviter au pays les conséquences du règne du Front populaire."⁸⁷ After this no doubt gratifying bit of flattery, Le Temps went on to outline

the duties of the parties of the Right. If the opposition were to fulfill its mission, it would have to face the new majority with a strong and united front. To do this it must avoid splintering into endless parties, groups and tendencies which might have an historical basis, but which were no longer necessary or significant.⁸⁸ Thus it may be seen that Le Temps made no distinction, for practical purposes at least, between the various parties of the Right. The Right could only be effective, warned Le Temps, by being scrupulously legalist, the more so in that certain elements of the government might tend to take legality lightly.⁸⁹ At any rate, Le Temps declared that it was certain the Right would prove to be a loyal and constructive opposition... "La bonne volonté des républicains nationaux est entière. Ce n'est pas d'eux que dépendra de la paix civile et de l'amitié française."⁹⁰

The last stage in the preparation of the new Popular Front government took place at the National Congress of the SFIO, held from May 30th to June 1st. Now that Blum knew under what conditions his government would be formed (i.e., that he could count on

neither Communist nor CGT participation), he felt in a better position to candidly ask his own party to give its parliamentary representatives the mandate to participate in and lead this government. In his speech to the Congress, Blum made a promise to the delegates which he was not to keep.

S'il se trouvait que nous échouions,
s'il se trouvait que des résistances
insurmontables nous obligent à constater
qu'il est impossible d'amender, du dedans,
la société actuelle, ... je serais le
premier, alors, à venir vous dire pourquoi
et comment nous avons échoué, et quelles
conséquences vous devrez alors tirer de
notre échec.⁹¹

Le Temps maintained that this was an open threat to "la France bourgeoise" and anyone else who might oppose the Popular Front. For the first time, it added, anticipating a little, a premier of France has spoken in the name of a class rather than of the whole nation. Blum would hope to make the regime as Marxist as possible without destroying it, in preparation for a real Socialist society.

Conformément à la tactique marxiste traditionnelle, M. Blum entend utiliser son passage au pouvoir pour préparer la révolution, l'étape légaliste de la conquête révolutionnaire ne faisant que précéder l'action qui doit mettre fin à l'état de choses existant.⁹²

The motion of support for Blum was noted unanimously by the SFIO Congress, although with reservations on the part of the 'Gauche révolutionnaire' wing of the party, which was not satisfied that the proposed measures would be sufficient to resolve the economic crisis. They urged massive nationalizations to destroy the power of the French financial elite for once and for all. Thus, said Le Temps, quite correctly, the 'Gauche révolutionnaire' would wish to hasten the process of softening France up for real socialism.⁹³ The Communist, Gitton, writing in L'Humanité, also complained of the wild talk of the 'Gauche révolutionnaire' (who thus found themselves on the extreme Left wing of French politics, to their satisfaction). "Il ne s'agit, ni de chambardement, ni d'un programme révolutionnaire, mais d'un programme à réaliser dans l'ordre, le calme et la tranquillité.

Nous estimons impossible une politique qui, face à la menace hitlérienne, risquerait de mettre en jeu la sécurité de la France,"⁹⁴

Footnotes to Chapter 2.

1. For the complete programme as published, see Lefranc, op. cit., annex 10, pp. 441-445.
2. D. LIGOU, Histoire du socialisme en France, 1871-1961, Paris, PUF, 1962, p. 409.
3. Le Temps, 11 January, 1936.
4. Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 33.
5. Danos and Gibelin, loc. cit.
6. Le Temps, 12 January, 1936.
7. Various euphemisms were used by Le Temps to refer to the Right: les modérés, les républicains nationaux, les républicains, les nationaux, les partis de gouvernement, etc.
8. Le Temps, 11 January, 1936.
9. Ibid., 19 January, 1936.
10. Ibid., 24 January, 1936.
11. Ibid., 28 January 1936.
12. Ibid., 2 February, 1936.
13. See comments in Larmour, op. cit., pp. 63-70.
14. Le Temps., 4 February, 1936.
15. Ibid., 8 February, 1936.
16. Ibid., 13 February 1936. D. Thomson, Democracy in France: The Third Republic, London, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 187, says of the existing electoral system: "... the stimulus it gave to even partial coalition probably did more good than harm."
17. Le Temps, 15 February, 1936.
18. E. Bonnefous, Histoire politique de la Troisième République. tome 5: La République en danger, des ligues au Front populaire, 1930-1936, Paris, PUF, 1962, p. 377.

19. Le Temps, 17 February, 1936.
20. Ibid., 23, 24, 26 February, 1936.
21. Lefranc, op. cit., pp. 101-103.
22. Chastenet, op. cit., p. 149.
23. Le Temps, 7 February, 1936.
24. Rémond, op. cit., p. 301.
25. Le Temps, 18 March, 1936.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 13 March, 1936.
28. Ibid., 29 March, 1936.
29. Ibid., 9, 25 April, 1936.
30. Ibid., 2 March, 1936.
31. Ibid., 28 February, 1936.
32. See above, Chapter 1, p. 6.
33. Le Temps, 23 March, 1936.
34. Ibid., 7 April, 1936.
35. Ibid., 21 April, 1936.
36. L. Blum, L'histoire jugera, Montreal and Paris, Editions L'Arbre-Editions Diderot, 1945, p. 137.
37. Le Temps, 18 April, 1936.
38. Dupeux, op. cit., p. 100.
39. Le Temps, 22 April, 1936.
40. It is interesting to note, however, that Chastenet, one of the directors of Le Temps in 1936, notes in his recent work on the period that the severe deflationary policy championed by Le Temps at the time had failed to solidify the franc or achieve any significant resurgence in industrial

production. Chastenet, op. cit., p. 127. In the same work, he calls the 'buying power' doctrine of the Popular Front: "Une idée fort soutenable". p. 169.

41. Le Temps, 26 March, 1936.
42. See H. Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, Harmondsworth Penguin, rev. ed., 1965, pp. 23-161.
43. Le Temps, 4 April, 1936.
44. Ibid., 17 April, 1936.
45. Ibid., 19 April, 1936.
46. Fauvet, op. cit., p. 172.
47. Le Temps, 11 April, 1936.
48. Ibid., 12 April, 1936.
49. Georges Lefranc, the historian of the Popular Front, aided in the drawing up of the CGT plan for the French economy.
50. Le Temps, 12 April, 1936.
51. Ibid., 28 March, 1936.
52. M. Thorez, Fils du peuple, Paris, Editions Sociales, 1949, p. 101.
53. Le Temps, 19 April, 1936.
54. Ibid., 14 April, 1936.
55. Ibid., 20 April, 1936.
56. Ibid., 21 April, 1936.
57. Goguel, op. cit., p. 509.
58. See table, page 74 below.
59. Le Temps, 29 April, 1936.
60. Ibid., 30 April 1936.

61. Ibid., 1 May, 1936.
62. Ibid., 3 May, 1936.
63. Cited in Bonnefous, Histoire politique, tome 5, p. 419.
64. Debu-Bridel, L'agonie de la Troisième République, 1929-1939, Paris, Editions du Bateau Ivre, 1948, p. 224, and Guérin, op. cit., p. 79.
65. Goguel, op. cit. p. 512, Dupeux shares this view
See G. Dupeux, "L'échec du premier gouvernement Leon Blum," Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, vol. 10 (janvier-mars, 1963), p. 35.
66. Maxence, op. cit., pp. 324, 326.
67. Ibid., p. 326.
68. A. Cobban, A History of Modern France, vol. 3: France of the Republics, 1871-1962, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965, p. 149, makes the mistake of stating that the electoral cohesion of the Right was weak compared to that of the Left.
69. Dupeux, Le Front populaire, pp. 125, 134.
70. Lefranc, op. cit., p. 120, has demonstrated on a regional basis that newspapers had little effect on the outcome of the elections.
71. Dupeux, Le Front populaire, p. 177.
72. Le Temps, 5 May, 1936.
73. Blum, Ouevres, vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 255-256.
74. Thoraz, Fils du peuple, p. 109.
75. A term used by the French Left to designate the nation's financial elite, which had its origin in the 200-member assembly of the Bank of France.
76. Le Temps, 7 May, 1936.

77. Blum, Ouevres, vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 256.
78. L. Blum, Léon Blum devant la Cour de Riom, février-mars 1942, Paris, Editions de la Liberté, 1944, p. 60.
79. Le Temps, 10 May, 1936.
80. Ibid., 12 May, 1936.
81. Werth, op. cit., p. 89.
82. Reported in J. Colton, Léon Blum, Humanist in Politics, New York, Knopf, 1966, p. 134.
83. Lefranc. op. cit., p. 150.
84. Le Temps, 20 May, 1936.
85. Ibid., 24 May, 1936.
86. Ibid., 6 May, 1936.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., May 11th, 1936.
89. Ibid., 18 May, 1936.
90. Ibid., 23 May, 1936.
91. Blum, Ouevres, vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 263
92. Le Temps, 2 June, 1936.
93. Ibid., 3 June 1936.
94. Humanité, 3 June, 1936, quoted in Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 62.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

Months of Reform

(i) The Strike

Even before the official investiture of the Blum government on June 6th, 1936, a new crises of an extraordinary and totally unexpected nature had erupted in France. A form of pressure never before used by the French working class, the sit-down strike, was rapidly paralysing the entire country. The first sit-down strikes occurred on May 11th and May 13th in Le Havre and Toulouse respectively, following the firing of workers who had taken May Day off. No special demands were made by the workers. Further strikes of the same nature followed on May 14th at Courbevoie, on the 18th at Vénissieux and Longwy. Only on the 24th did L'Humanité take note of the novel and effective mode of striking, and only after the 28th did the strike become general!

The mood of excitement and anticipation which gripped the entire Left was perhaps responsible for the strike outbreak of the working class, who must have felt, like Marceau Pivert, leader of the SFIO Gauche Révolutionnaire, that,

Tout est possible, maintenant, à tout vitesse...
Nous sommes à une heure qui ne repassera pas
de sitôt au cadran de notre histoire.
Alors, puisque TOUT est possible, droit
devant nous, camarades!²

It was also on the 28th that Le Temps first
commented on the 'grèves sur le tas', where, it noted those
occupying the factories were being fed by local Popular
Front committees.³ The strikers comported themselves
well and even maintained the factory equipment while the
strike was on, which sparked a bit of sarcastic wit in the
ordinarily pedantic editorials of Le Temps, where it was
reasoned that the very calmness of the workers was ominous,
for their calmness came from their sense of power.⁴

Vous pénétrez chez votre voisin, vous vous
y installer, mais vous ne brisez ni les
meubles, ni la vaisselle. Ainsi montrez-
vous que les notions de propriété et de
liberté ne sont pour vous de vains
sophismes.⁵

The workers were giving a 'leçon de modération dans la
pratique de l'illégalité."

Le Temps affected to sympathize with Blum at this conjuncture, pointing out that the "activité revendicatrice du prolétariat" could very well compromise the feasibility of his programme. Recalling earlier parallels with Spain, it charged that the Communists and perhaps the CGT as well, while feigning to support the government, were really behind the strike activity. "Tout se passe comme si l'extrémisme, ayant juré la perte de M. Léon Blum, s'ingéniait à la fois à le compromettre et à le paralyser."⁶ Yet later in the same editorial, Le Temps argued against the thesis of Communist and CGT responsibility and on the next day, May 31st, while charging that the sit-down strikes were a revolutionary act against private property, it no longer seemed sure who was behind them. It raised the possibility that the parties of government had been by-passed by their militants, whom it called 'the third government', as opposed to the Blum and Sarraut governments

There is an entire literature on the cause of the strikes. It seems extremely likely that they were spontaneous in origin, as one union leader argued at the

time. "Un fait concret: la famine; un climat favorable; la victoire politique; une foi retrouvée: l'unité syndicale. Un exemple hypnotique; la métallurgie parisienne (where the strikes first took on a major amplitude). Voilà tout le mystère."⁷ A Communist, criticizing PC policy in retrospect, indicates that her party was taken by surprise as well... "Nous ne sommes pas, dès l'abord, orientés avec assez de fermeté et de persévérance vers les masses:... nous n'avions pas assez comptés sur l'action venant d'en bas."⁸ At the time the Trotskyites were blamed by the SFIO and the PC, but Danos and Gibelin counter that because of the relatively small size of the group their influence in June 1936 could only have been negligible.⁹ Theories emanating from the French Right have often been nothing less than fantastic. Henry de Kérillis of Echo de Paris, claimed that the Trotskyites in France were responsible for the strikes and were supported by Hitler, because Hitler wanted nothing better than to see revolution and war break out in France.¹⁰ Jacques Bardoux theorized that the Comintern was responsible for the strikes, which were the first phase of a Communist takeover scheduled for June 12th (with the connivance of Blum!).

The opposition of Lebas and Salengro, two SFIO ministers, forced Blum to inform the Comintern that the coup d'état was no longer practicable.¹¹ Jacques Chastenet, more vaguely, suggests that the sit-down strikes may have begun following a directive from Communist cells, but stresses that Blum was not in control of the situation.¹²

What may have led Le Temps to believe in the beginning that the Communists were behind the strikes was that at the start the first reaction of local Communist cells was to take the part of the strikers.¹³ On May 30th, Premier Sarraut made enquiries with employers to see if they wanted the government to use force to evacuate the factories. They responded negatively, fearing that if blood were shed, real revolution might break out. On Monday, June 2nd, the number of strike-bound enterprises rose from 15 to 150, spreading away from the metallurgical industry to other sectors. The labour unions benefitted immediately from the strike by a rapid increase in membership. In the one-month period of May 15th to June 15th, 1936, CGT strength rose from 785,000 to 2,500,000 members. Growth, once spurred by

the strike, continued into 1937, in which year the average CGT membership stood at about four million; that of the Christian unions, around 400,000.¹⁴ In spite of this, the CGT was unable to control the strike, although it tried valiantly, even resorting several times to a call for a general strike in an industry in an attempt to gain the initiative.¹⁵

Le Temps used the impotence of the CGT to control its followers as an argument against collective bargaining. Recalling the Paris metal-workers' strike in 1920, when, after signing two successive contracts with employers, the workers struck again with further demand, Le Temps conjectured that an agreement signed one day by the CGT might well be repudiated the next by the workers.¹⁶

As the strike continued to grow, the alarm of Le Temps increased accordingly. It noted that no one, CGT, SFIO, or PC seemed to have any control over the strikers, although each had declared itself to be in solidarity with them. Le Temps demanded that Blum, although not yet premier, step in and put an end to

'la violation de la liberté individuelle, la paralysie de la production, l'arrêt de la vie sociale, l'oppression du pays par un pouvoir occulte et irresponsable."¹⁷

This unusual request accords itself well with Blum's testimony at the Riom trial where he pointed out that...

... dans la bourgeoisie et en particulier dans le monde patronal, on me considérait, on m'attendait, on m'espérait comme un sauveur. Les circonstances étaient si angoissantes, on était si près de quelque chose qui ressemblait à la guerre civile qu'on n'espérait plus que dans une sorte d'intervention providentielle.¹⁸

When Blum presented his cabinet to the President of the Republic, M. Lebrun, on June 4th, two days before he was due to take office, the President requested him to broadcast an appeal to the workers urging them to have confidence in him. Blum was willing to do this, but refused to disassociate himself from the working class in his speech. In Le Temps' estimation, either Blum was the prisoner of his irresponsible followers, or else he approved of their illegal acts, there being no other explanation for his failure to censure them. If the

latter possibility were true, then let him be honest about it. "... il faut proclamer que le gouvernement prend un caractère dictatorial et que c'en est fini du régime républicain."

On June 5th, Lambert-Ribot, executive secretary of the Comité des Forges, got in touch with Blum to urge him to establish contact with Confederation Generale de la Production Française (the CGPF) with a view to beginning negotiations between that body and the CGT to end the strike. Unfortunately, the CGPF had no mandate from its members to undertake negotiations nor did it have much authority over its membership, which represented only about 15 to 20% of French employers.²⁰ The CGT, of course, was also in a position where it could not be absolutely certain of being obeyed. Nevertheless, these two organizations were the only ones which could be said to represent any extensive sections of employers or workers. Representatives from the two groups met in the evening of June 7th at the Hotel Matignon (Blum's official residence) under the chairmanship of the Premier, and an agreement was rapidly reached which constituted a capitulation on the part of the CGPF to

the CGT demands. The essential provisions of the Matignon Agreements were: a 7 to 15% increase in salaries, the increase in any one establishment not to exceed 12%; recognition of workers' delegates; the admission of the principle of syndical liberty; the acceptance of collective bargaining, the forbidding of sanctions against workers following a strike; and in return, the CGT undertook to bring about the evacuation of factories occupied by the strikers.²¹

James Joll considers that the Matignon Agreements were the greatest achievement of the Blum government.²² Indeed, a number of historians ²³ believe that the situation, which Gordon Wright calls the greatest French social upheaval since 1848, was a revolutionary one and that the signing of the Matignon Agreements forestalled that revolution by giving the workers the impression that the Popular Front government meant business. If the Matignon Agreements were Blum's greatest achievement, then it must be conceded that he played a singularly passive role therein. The pressure which forced the employers to sign the agreements came from the working class, the initiative to negotiate came from the employers who

nevertheless were careful to let the public believe that the initiative had come from Blum. Why? To hide their weakness and fright from the workers, to reinforce the Blum government's authority over the workers and to protect themselves from the recriminations of those they represented.²⁴ Thus, Blum, the theoretician of revolution, was passively instrumental in ending the threat of revolution in France. As Marceau Pivert later commented bitterly... "Mais il était Léon Blum. Il était trop 'grand bourgeois', subtil, raffiné pour devenir un chef révolutionnaire."²⁵

The attitude of Le Temps to the Matignon Agreements seems inexplicable in terms of its association with the trusts, who virtually controlled the CGPF at this time. The Matignon Agreements, commented Le Temps, have been greeted as a victory for the extreme Left, the CGT and the PC. Supporting itself with quotations from Georges Sorel, Le Temps argued that the Radicals were the first dupes, that the Socialists would have been cast aside as well when the masses has no further need for them, then the extreme Left would come into its own.

Il apparaît avec une certitude aveuglante que

la formation du Front populaire, qui se présentait comme une formation électorale à tendances démocratiques, n'a servi que de paravent à une offensive de grand style en vue d'instaurer en France la dictature du prolétariat ... De toute façon, et quoi qu'il advienne par la suite, la victoire remportée par le communisme et le syndicalisme correspond au plus grave échec que le régime parlementaire ait encore subi depuis qu'il existe dans notre pays.²⁷

The victory of the working class now menaced the country economically as well as politically, asserted Le Temps. The agreements would raise production costs by 35%, prices by 20%, it predicted, if industry were able to survive this blow at all. Exports would be stopped and importers would have a field day, forcing the government to strictly regulate and close off the national economy and institute a regime of autarchy. This would end liberty and bring about a veritable economic fascism.²⁸

But, the strikes did not abate immediately. In the key metallurgical industry, workers refused to accept the solution offered by the Matignon Agreements, and twice rejected compromise solutions negotiated by the CGT. At one point they gave an ultimatum of 48 hours

for the acceptance of their conditions, after which, in the event of rejection, they would undertake to run the factories themselves.²⁹ Dolléans quotes one delegate ... "Nos camarades sont fatigués de l'occupation des usines et, si une solution n'intervient pas au plus tôt, ils vont tenter de mettre en route les machines par leurs propres moyens."³⁰ Ligou suggests that inexperienced and irresponsible leadership as well as the activity of Trotskyists accounted for the persistence of the strikes.³¹ Certainly, the CGT was doing its best to end the strikes, but was hampered in its work by those who wished to transform the strike into a revolution. Daniel Guérin, of the SFIO 'Gauche révolutionnaire', gives us a very interesting insight into the role of the Left wing of the SFIO in the strike. The 'Gauche révolutionnaire', more numerous than the Trotskyites or the anarchists, worked with these groups in exhorting the strikers to continue, but owing to their middle class origins, were often unable to prevail over the Communists who urged the strikers to return to work.³²

Meanwhile, Le Temps was in a high state of agitation over the continued strike activity, accusing

the Popular Front of fascism and proletarian dictatorship in the same breath. The Popular Front, it fulminated, was elected on an antifascist wave of sentiment, but...

Le fascisme a passé sous le forme du Front populaire, et un sorte de dictature du prolétariat s'est institué; car l'occupation des usines par les ouvriers est un abus de la force illégale à laquelle la force légale refuse de s'opposer.³³

The government, said Le Temps, had now arbitrated a settlement of the labour conflict, but in spite of the workers promising their support for the government 'sans éclipse' (?)³⁴, they had actually turned the tables, taking the initiative themselves and asking for the government's support in the continuation of the strike. The time had come, it concluded, for the government to show that it was worthy of that name and demonstrate its own authority.³⁵

At the height of the strike, around June 11th, two million workers were on strike in France and Algeria, and the economy was paralysed. The contagion had even spread to Belgium where 400,000 workers laid down their tools. On the 11th, Maurice Thorez made his famous appeal ... "il faut savoir terminer une grève" and

thereafter the strike began to abate slowly, in Paris, at least. Walter suggests that part of the fault for the lingering on of the strike lay with the employers. "Il est vrai que les patrons ne mettait pas beaucoup d'empressement à appliquer les dispositions de l'accord conclu, essayant de reprendre d'une main ce qu'ils se voyaient obligés de donner de l'autre..."³⁶ The CGT continued diplomatically to press the strikers to return to work.

Elle [the CGT] demande aux ouvriers qui n'ont pas encore bénéficiés des Accords Matignon de présenter préalablement à tout mouvement leurs revendications aux directions d'entreprises et de ne déclarer la grève que lorsqu'ils se heurtent à un refus de discuter ou à l'intransigeance patronale.

Elle déclare que les accords doivent être strictiment respectés par tous.³⁷

At first, since little abatement was visible the day after Thorez's appeal, Le Temps warned that the PC was playing a double game.³⁸ On the 14th, however, Le Temps noted that the strikes did seem to be slowing down. From this it deduced that the Communists had been the animators of the strikes all along, that the sit-down strikes were their work. The Communist tactic, explained Le Temps was to penetrate and subvert; that which they

had done with the workers' movement, they would now attempt on Parliament.³⁹ As can be seen, whatever happened in the matter of the strikes, Le Temps interpreted it as proof of Communist culpability.

For the rest of the month of June, the strike slowly diminished in intensity, although with an occasional flare-up. Sometimes, as in the case of the workers in the aviation plants, or those of the Bordeaux oil refineries, the strikers demanded the nationalization of their industry.⁴⁰ Le Temps, however, ignored this sort of event and concentrated on taunting the government with the supposed misdeeds of their Communist allies, and on urging the cabinet to deal more harshly with the strikers.

The summer of 1936 witnessed an extraordinary burgeoning of flags in France, both red and tricolour. When a Radical Minister of State chided the Right for suddenly sprouting the tricolour after years of ignoring it, Le Temps sprang to the defense. The Right, said Le Temps, was accused of factious behaviour because it flew the flag of the Republic in reply to the government's seeming adoption of the red flag⁴¹ which had freely flown in France during the month of June. If

the flaunting of the tricolour made the government nervous, added Le Temps, if it allowed the illegal strikes to continue, it would appear to be a strange defender of the Republic and Vincent Auriol need not expect a restoration of confidence.⁴² At a Communist meeting at Choisy-le-Roi, the red flag and the tricolour, the Marseillaise and the Internationale appeared together, reported Le Temps. With the growing uneasiness of the Radicals, it continued, the SFIO and the PC were making reassuring gestures; Humanité by telling its readers "... les radicaux ont raison"; and Salengro (the SFIO Minister of the Interior) by asking the workers that they abstain "... de tout geste qui puisse heurter les classes moyennes, les paysans ou les républicains". Let the Radicals realize, warned Le Temps, that a Socialist experiment was under way, that the Communists were making use of the strikes to prepare the workers for revolution and the crushing of the Radicals' electoral mainstay, the 'petite bourgeoisie'. When the Radicals still held the balance of power, they should use it to stop this process before it were too late.⁴³ Average Frenchmen, Le Temps affirmed, in an editorial discussing signs of anxiety in the Radical press, share the incomprehension

of the 'Français moyen de gauche'.⁴⁴ The intentions of Blum and the Radicals were, of course, noble, but given the impatience of the masses and the surreptitious activity carried on behind Blum's back by his allies, he would have to re-establish a sense of submission to discipline, hierarchy and authority among the workers before production could be normalized and the success of the Popular Front assured, Le Temps advised.⁴⁵ The PC was responsible for the continued disorders, it argued; therefore the only way for the government to end the strikes would be by a show of firmness and authority, instead of its present permissiveness.⁴⁶

There were three areas -- North Africa, Alsace-Lorraine and the country-side -- in which the strikes stimulated especially vivid reprobation from Le Temps. In North Africa, the conditions of the Arab workers were often inferior to those of their counterparts of European origin, and in June, 1936, the natives participated for the first time on a large scale with Europeans in strike activity. Disorders arose as natives became involved in armed clashes with the police and army.⁴⁷ Moutet, the Socialist colonial minister, had

blundered, in Le Temps opinion, by informing the natives that they could expect to receive the same consideration as French workers. Le Temps which had "... toujours défendu ici la conception impériale," felt that Moutet's statement was partially responsible for the strike outbreaks.⁴⁸ The local Communists also received a share of the blame; Communists who were not likely to adopt a stance of loyalty to France as the French PC had done, Le Temps stressed, if France lost her colonies, all the parties of the Popular Front, including the Radicals, would be responsible.

Peut-on penser, au surplus, que les agents communistes indigènes, après quinze ans d'enseignements de ce genre, pourraient se transformer brusquement, et transformer leur propagande de révolte en propagande de loyalisme aussi aisément que Maurice Thorez passe du chant de l'Internationale à celui de la Marseillaise.⁴⁹

When agricultural strikes occurred near Colmar in Alsace, Le Temps was quick to point out that an autonomist newspaper had capitalized on the event to claim that Alsace's attachment to France would cause its economic ruin.⁵⁰ As Werth indicates, the threat posed by the

Alsatian autonomist movement was at most a form of coercion.

Alsatian autonomism in its most prevalent sense is therefore simply a movement in favour of the status quo, and against any change. "Autonomism", an Alsatian told me, 'is simply a revolver we keep in our drawer. We shall bring it out when the burglar comes'... the eventual burglar being, for instance, a French Left-Wing government.⁵¹

Nonetheless, Le Temps, addressing itself to the Radicals and Socialists, warned that the PC was playing the game of the local autonomists.

La tactique est simple. D'une part les communistes fomentent l'agitation ouvrière, applaudissent l'occupation des entreprises dans nos départements recouvrés; d'autre part les autonomistes essaient d'exploiter, contre l'unité nationale les justes indignations que provoque cette anarchie dans les campagnes alsaciennes. Les uns et les autres se trouvent d'accord ensuite pour voter, à la Commission d'Alsace et de Lorraine, les mesures qui pourraient nuire à l'unité nationale. Étranges jacobins que nos communistes.⁵²

In early July, strikes by agricultural workers began to occur in the North and the Ile-de-France. Le Temps chose to explain these as part of the PC strategy to gain the rural masses. The Communists were accused of attaching more importance to spreading their doctrine than to helping agriculture re-establish itself.⁵³ This time Le Temps had no need to spur the Radicals. On July 7th, Bienvenu-Martin, president of the Gauche démocratique (the Senate Radicals) made further support of the government by his group in the Senate conditional on a firm promise not to tolerate further occupations of factories and farms. Salengro gave them his word, which was greeted with triumph by Le Temps. "Cette journée, qui fait honneur au Sénat, comptera dans les annales de la République."⁵⁴ This promise, however, did not end the strike by the farm workers who were still threatening to go on strike en masse, if their demands were not met by July 14th. Le Temps interpreted this in their usual imaginative way, charging that the PC, in softening up the regime, had decided on a 'jacquerie' just before harvest time. In spite of all Salengro's good intentions, it continued, the 'ministère des masses' (In Le Temps' terminology, this refers to the PC and the CGT) was

doing just as it liked, forcing the government to accept its 'faits accomplis'.⁵⁵ When the 'jacquerie' failed to materialize, this too was explained as Communist strategy. Although certain Radicals have allowed themselves to be tricked by this apparent moderation, concluded Le Temps, let both them and the Socialists beware of Communist perfidy.⁵⁶

(ii) The Imposed Reforms

Léon Blum presented his cabinet for the approval of the Chambers on June 6th, 1936, the first French cabinet ever to be led by a Socialist. Le Temps described it as very peculiar, too cumbersome, and evidently not what Blum would have liked.⁵⁷ Blum's theories of cabinet structure, based on his experience as personal assistant to a cabinet minister during World War I, had been developed in an early work, La Réforme gouvernementale (1918). The premier must hold no portfolio, he must be assisted in his co-ordinating role by a group of executive assistants; and the cabinet must be divided into four main sectors; military affairs, foreign affairs, economic affairs, and general affairs -- each sector subject to

the centralizing power of the premier. Each sector would be headed by a minister, each department by an under-secretary, the whole forming a compact, effective team.⁵⁸ This was not what emerged, as one union leader lamented.

On attendait à une sort de Comité de Salut Public .. On eut un lourd conseil de 35 personnes, théoriquement hiérarchisés ... Et quand on essaya de deviner pourquoi telles ou telles personnalités avait été choisies, on s'aperçut avec tristesse que le souci d'équilibrer les influences respectives des groupes, de sous-groupes ou de chapelles... l'avait emporté.⁵⁹

Blum's ministerial declaration was greeted with suspicion by Le Temps. If the declaration sounded innocuous, it argued it was because Blum was veiling his sinister plans in his usual subtle and elegant manner. The first "vacation of legality" (the term 'vacation of legality' was Blum's euphemism for the dictatorship of the proletariat⁶⁰) had arrived, since Blum made it clear that he refused to disavow the strikers, illegal though their actions might be.⁶¹ Blum, however, asked for the fastest possible consideration of proposed legislation, since he felt that rapid passage of the Popular Front programme would encourage the strikers to return

to work.

The Assembly responded to Blum's appeal, so that by June 19th, the essential social legislation; paid vacations, collective bargaining, the forty-hour week, special powers to change decree-laws affecting civil service salaries and pensions, had received Parliamentary approbation (the Senate showing itself to be slightly less co-operative than the Chamber).

Le Temps did not chose to comment on the power given to the government to suppress the decree-laws reducing salaries and pension. It was, on the other hand, uniformly skeptical about the remainder of the social legislation. As we have seen, it felt that collective contracts between labour and management were ordinarily unworkable.⁶² The forty-four week would restrict production without affecting unemployment...

La semaine de quarante heures aggraverait en réalité le chômage. Mais admettant même qu'elle crée, au début, de nouveaux emplois, on ne trouverait pas assez d'oeuvre qualifiée pour les remplir, et les manoeuvres dont l'emploi dépend des ouvriers

qualifiés ne pourraient pas être embauchés.⁶³

Those who were unemployed were often incapable of learning a skilled craft, Le Temps added. The difficulties, resulting from the haste with which the forty-hour week and paid vacations had been passed, were pointed out.

The public would be greatly inconvenienced by the stoppages of many necessary services on Mondays and for two weeks during the summer.⁶⁴

When the maximum civil service retirement age was lowered to 70, Le Temps, while admitting that this would allow greater opportunity to younger men, declared that it was aimed at permitting the government to purge the bureaucracy and the army of Rightists.⁶⁵

When a law was passed raising the ceiling wage on which workers and employers were to pay social insurance, Le Temps estimated that the new premiums to be paid would amount to a billion francs a year, and commented bitterly.

Les charges s'accumulent sur notre malheureuse économie nationale. On lui inflige d'un coup une hausse considérable des salaires, les frais des congés payés et de la semaine de quarante heures. Ce n'était pas encore assez; sans lui laisser de répit, on augmente le poid des assurances sociales. On oublie qu'avec

une économie épuisée, il ne peut y avoir de progrès sociale durable et solide.⁶⁶

Le Temps did not mount anything like a campaign against individual laws. It was the philosophy behind them, the theory that it was possible to stimulate the economy by increasing the buying power of wage earners that it repeatedly and untiringly attacked. Deflation, it insisted, would have worked in France had it not been for the uncertainties of the Ethiopian War, the re-occupation of the Rhineland and the electoral campaign.⁶⁷ Forcing industry to pay higher salaries, by virtue of the Matignon Agreements, at a time when it was barely recovering from crisis, might cause another economic down-turn.⁶⁸

Le Temps had a powerful ally in the Radicals of the Senate, such as Joseph Caillaux of the Finance Committee, who made it clear, in order to fix the responsibility for the government's policy on the government alone, that they preferred balanced budgets and deflation. Le Temps applauded this attitude. If the opposition were to give the Popular Front the opportunity to do its worst, if they were to give it free reign in its Socialist experiment, its certain failure would be a lesson for the

nation, and it would be impossible for Blum to "... retirer le socialisme sain et sauf de l'aventure."⁶⁹

It was predicted by Le Temps that the wage increases would be an especial burden on small enterprises, which would be unable to bear the increased production costs. When the government decided to extend credit to such enterprises and to exporters, it was accused of ruining the middle classes in order to appear as their saviour, and of using this manoeuvre to draw private enterprise into its control.⁷⁰ That the bankruptcy rate dropped by 25% between 1935 and 1936 ⁷¹ would seem to indicate that, whatever its motives, this aid, plus a rapid increase in prices, quite effectively cushioned the consequences of increased production costs on small businesses.

Rising prices at home aggravated France's trade difficulties, so that in spite of increased productivity in 1936, French exports remained stable while her imports rose,⁷² doubling her merchandise trade deficit over 1935. the government sought to curb this trend by taking measures against exorbitant price increases and by export subsidies. Le Temps, while admitting that the Italians

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were more thoroughgoing, characterized this tampering with natural economic laws as fascism and an attack on republican liberties. The only rational way to destroy the disparity between French prices and world prices was to lower production costs, which the Popular Front, with its policies of wage increases and inflation, was not about to do, Le Temps declared.⁷³ Evoking the example of the American economy where, it argued, only when the Supreme Court nullified Roosevelt's New Deal legislation did solid growth resume, Le Temps urged that world prosperity depended upon economic liberalism. "La prospérité nouvelle a cependant des grandes chances de durer, et de s'étendre, si la politique ne vient pas tout gâter, car elle est due à des causes naturelles, indépendantes de l'action des gouvernements." ⁷⁴

If the lesson were intended for Blum, it fell on deaf ears, for the Premier was already an enthusiastic admirer of Roosevelt and the New Deal. "Seeing him (Roosevelt) act, the French democracy has had the feeling that an example was traced for it, and it is this example that we wish to follow, adapting it to the conditions and resources of our country."⁷⁵

On July 3rd, the Chamber of Deputies began discussion of a bill providing for the establishment of a National Wheat Marketing Board. In spite of the enthusiasm of Mr. Monnet, the Minister of Agriculture, and the support of the Chamber for the project, it only became law (in a modified form) on August 15th, after seven trips to and from the Senate. The Board, by eliminating private speculation in grain and by stabilizing prices at an improved level, was intended to aid in the carrying out of one of the aims of the Popular Front, stated in its programme, the raising of prices in agricultural products.⁷⁶ Again, Le Temps demonstrated itself to be a warm admirer of senatorial wisdom, seconding the Senators' arguments. The Popular Front, it claimed, was rushing its Wheat Board legislation through to reap the credit for a natural rise in prices due to a small harvest. Only on a free market would the peasants get the best prices. The monopoly would be expensive, and might cause overproduction. In the struggle between Georges Monnet and the Senate, the latter won permission for private dealers to operate within the Wheat Board system, and Monnet won on the question of who was to fix prices. This would be a

corporate body of producers, consumers, millers and government officials. When economic liberty was thus abrogated, argued Le Temps, political liberty would soon follow, because a free political system, subject as it is to rapid shifts in opinion and electoral reversals, would be unable to command the huge economic machinery -- hence corporate dictatorship.⁷⁷

No mention was made in the editorials of Le Temps of the nationalization of war industries, passed by the legislature on August 11th, which provided for state ownership or control of most aircraft and armament plants.⁷⁸

The public works legislation, requiring the expenditure of 20 billion francs over a period of three years, became law on August 18th, but aroused only one editorial in Le Temps, full of the usual liberal and pragmatic objections. France could not afford any such extensive measure, given the current immobility of investment capital, and, since it would be a rebirth of activity in the private sector which signalled the end of the economic crisis, it should have been this sector that the government favoured, said Le Temps on July 15th.

Perhaps the most important structural reform accomplished by the Popular Front was the destruction of the independence of the Bank of France. On July 24th, the Bank was endowed with a new statute by which all shareholders (40,000) were granted a vote, rather than merely the 200 most important shareholders as formerly; and by which the old Council of Regents was replaced by a corporate council similar in structure to that of the Wheat Board.⁷⁹ Le Temps criticized the new general council of the Bank as being largely composed of appointed bureaucrats, making it more dependent on the State. The general council of the Bank would no longer play its old role of protecting the currency by refusing credits to the State and by severely limiting the issue of new currency. Le Temps suggested that this could look like a prelude to devaluation.⁸⁰

In reality, control over the Bank of France was necessary to implement the Popular Front's deficit financing of the budget, the current deficit for the first seven months of 1936 being ten billion francs. The Finance Minister, Vincent Auriol, planned to get rid of this by a conversion of state bonds held by the

Bank at 6% to a direct advance to the State for a 2% commission. The Bank would then extend a credit of 30 billion to the State for its current purposes. However, Auriol hoped to obviate all this by the immediate floating of a public bond issue.⁸¹ Le Temps felt that this sort of manipulation was inflationary to the extreme. If the bond issue were to succeed, the government's previous cultivation of public confidence would be repayed. If not, Auriol hinted, firm measures would be considered against those who were exporting their capital. Shocked, Le Temps declared that confidence could not be obtained through constraint. Auriol had firmly rejected devaluation but he had also turned his back on budget equilibrium, rendering, in Le Temps' opinion, his position impossible.⁸²

The Communist solution to financing the measures voted by the Popular Front was simpler; tax the rich. Le Temps attempted to argue that this would destroy what little capital the rich had, and this investment capital was necessary for the functioning of the capitalist system. Besides, said Le Temps, quoting statistics to demonstrate that the incomes and fortunes

of the rich had been decreasing since 1913, while salaries had been rising, the rich were a dying race.⁸³ This, according to Shepard B. Clough, was simply not true.

"France, contrary to popular belief, had in comparison with other countries a relatively high concentration of wealth."⁸⁴ He adds that it is the caution of the holders of this wealth that has retarded French economic development.

The programme of the Popular Front contained promises of measures in the political as well as in the social and economic realms; syndical liberty was to be guaranteed, the neo-fascist leagues were to be dissolved, the educational system was to be the subject of reforms and the freedom of conscience of teachers assured. Syndical liberty, i.e. the right of all workers to belong to a union without being subject to sanctions from their employer, was accepted in principle and guaranteed by representatives of the employers as one of the provisions of the Matignon Agreements. Le Temps defined syndical liberty differently, however. For it syndical liberty consisted of the right to belong to whichever union one preferred, of the freedom to not belong to a union, and of the freedom to abstain from a strike. It accused the

CGT of seeking a monopoly of the representation of workers at the expense of the Confédération française des Travailleurs Chrétiens and of company unions. In seeking such a dictatorial and undemocratic monopoly, charged Le Temps, Jouhaux (head of the CGT) was attempting to build a fascist style state union -- red fascism.⁸⁵

In spite of its protestations of independence, said Le Temps, the CGT was bound to the collectivist Popular Front, hence union members would be caught up in a state union with the coming of the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁸⁶ In September, CGT workers at the Michelin factory in Clermont-Ferrand, representing some 2/3 of the employees, went on strike. The remainder, members of the Christian union, refused to follow suit and were expelled from the factory by the strikers, whereupon they marched on and occupied the prefecture in the name of their freedom to work. The government then fired the prefect and dealt energetically with the dissidents. While agreeing to the necessity for energetic action, Le Temps urged that the action should have been directed against the CGT strikers as well, who, in its opinion, were seeking nothing less than the destruction of their com-

petitors. If the violation of syndical liberty and the right to work were to be added to the violations of private property (the sit-down strikes) without the government intervening, Le Temps continued, then the regime was indeed in peril.⁸⁷

One of the principal themes recurring on the editorials of Le Temps was that the Popular Front tended to behave arbitrarily and that its conception of liberty was one-sided. When the government, in carrying out one of its long-standing promises, dissolved four of the neo-fascist leagues⁸⁸ on June 18th, Le Temps charged that it was tampering with liberty of association, while sustaining the illegal activities of the strikers. The real threat against parliamentary republicanism, it asserted, came from the Left, who at a moment when the international situation demanded national concord, was taking up "... une position de combat à l'intérieur de nos frontieres."⁸⁹ When Salengro asked the workers to observe republican order in the country, using this to justify the dissolution of the leagues who were supposedly a danger to the Republic, Le Temps retorted...

Nous n'admettons l'agitation illégale et factieuse d'aucun coté; mais ... si on

prétend le réprimer à droite pour
la laisser se développer librement à
l'extrême gauche ... l'ordre tel que
le conçoit M. Salengro est donc purement
arbitraire et partial.⁹⁰

In the same vein, the government was accused of
undermining the independence of the judiciary when it
changed the method of judicial advancement.⁹¹ On
July 4th, Le Temps railed against what it called the
partisan annulment of Jean Chiappe's (Chiappe was the
former prefect of the Paris police) election as deputy
from Ajaccio, undertaken, in its view, purely in a
spirit of revenge and at the instigation of the Communists.

Que conclure de tout cela, sinon qu'il
saute aux yeux que la majorité, renouvelant
l'erreur commise par elle dans l'affaire
des ligues, vient de compromettre encore un
peu plus le succès de l'expérience du Front
Populaire? Elle déchaîne les passions alors
qu'il faudrait y mettre fin à tout prix si
l'on veut vraiment faire face aux périls
extérieurs.⁹²

Later in the month, on July 29th, Le Temps accused
the government of silencing the voice of the opposition by
broadcasting, in the French public broadcasting systems,

"revue de la presse", only press excerpts favourable to the Popular Front.

When Jacques Doriot, the renegade Communist and out-spoken fascist leader of the 'Parti populaire français', held a meeting in Reims, the Right wing Radical mayor of the city did not prevent the meeting, but set the police on counter-demonstrators, the Socialists were highly displeased. Since when had it been the policy of the Republic to deny anyone, even fascist, freedom of speech, demanded Le Temps; since when has the Republic tolerated disorder?

Il paraît de plus en plus que la tolérance, qui est la plus haute vertu des démocraties, n'est pas le souci cardinal du Front Populaire. Par ailleurs, une sorte de veto a été prononcé par le deuxième gouvernement, 'le gouvernement des masses' contre certains partis nouveaux qui n'auraient pas le droit de tenir des réunions publiques, privilège réservé aux seuls rassemblements révolutionnaires.⁹³

In the field of education, reforms undertaken by the government included a law increasing the school leaving age from 13 to 14. Apart from the intrinsic merits of the new law, the government hoped that it

would have the effect of lessening unemployment to a degree by keeping children from taking jobs that adults could fill. As a corollary, 3,500 new teaching positions were to be created to handle the accretion of students.⁹⁴ In the past, commented Le Temps, the fines and prison sentences applicable to those who kept their children out of school had not been applied and the new laws would be no easier to enforce.⁹⁵ The real purpose of the law, it suggested, was to make jobs for teachers, a profession whose members were usually among the staunchest supporters of Socialism.

Quant aux 'usagers' vise-t-on à diminuer le nombre des illettres, à éveiller par cette prolongation des vocations professionnelles ou pré-professionnelles, ou encore à resorber le chômage dans les ateliers -- d'où nombre d'industriels écartent les enfants ayant moins de quatorze ans d'âge -- ou simplement d'une culture complémentaire, et de quelle culture? ⁹⁶

Why not, instead, Le Temps suggested, continue education in the army or direct it towards practical subjects which would attract peasants' sons.⁹⁷

The reason for Le Temps' preference for military

over civilian teachers becomes clearer when one observes its reaction to the proceedings of the Leftist Teachers' Union congress, where the delegates denounced the obstructive opposition of the Senate to the will of the elected representatives of the people, where motions of integral pacifism were passed. Le Temps' reaction was outrage.

Le syndicat dit national des instituteurs et institutrices, réuni en congrès, a continué hier de donner la mesure du scandale qu'il semble cultiver comme son jardin .. Jaloux d'occuper le premier rang parmi les internationalistes, dans le dessein aussi de prendre l'avantage sur les communistes qui, provisoirement au moins, préconisent la défense nationale ... loin de tempérer leur pacifisme dans leurs délibérations d'hier, ils l'ont exaspéré.⁹⁸

Le Temps went on to demand that the Ministers of War and Education make an investigation to ascertain to what extent such treasonable pacifism was being taught to the young.

One of the pledges of the Popular Front, however, was to guarantee freedom of conscience to teachers. The violent reaction on the part of the Senate to the pro-

ceedings of the congress nonetheless forced Education Minister Jean Zay to promise to make an enquiry into the extent that pacifism was being taught in the schools. Zay also spoke of a statute limiting the independence of action of teachers. Le Temps again urged rapid action in this field, for the safety of France.⁹⁹

It will be recalled that as far as defence policy was concerned, the programme of the Popular Front envisaged disarmament rather than armament. While supporting the concept of collective security, it called for an "Effort incessant pour passer de la paix armée à la paix désarmée, d'abord par une convention de limitation, puis par la réduction générale, simultanée et contrôlée des armements."¹⁰⁰ Of course, disarmament under these conditions was becoming more and more difficult to envisage, even for a government of the Left, given the threat posed by the dictators. As Arnold Wolfers puts it. "But by 1936, France had lost so much of her freedom of choice and action that internal changes were not mirrored with equal strength in the course of her foreign policy."¹⁰¹ Obviously, defence policy would be closely linked to foreign policy. Therefore, from the beginning, the Popular Front

government was, in the words of de la Gorce, "... most warmly disposed to an increased military effort."¹⁰² In June, 1936, General Gamelin sent Defence Minister Daladier a note outlining the minimum needs of the army in the matter of equipment and asking for an expenditure of nine billion. The government increased this figure to fourteen billion on the 7th of September, following Hitler's decision to increase the duration of military service in Germany.

Le Temps approved any measure which might strengthen the prestige and effectiveness of the French army. Therefore it was particularly irritated when Humanité called for a purification, in a republican sense, of the armed forces. In order to discover nests of royalists in the army, the Communists asked soldiers to pass on information concerning evidence of disloyalty to the Republic among officers. This was not just a question of petty spying, in Le Temps' view, but a Communist attempt to undermine the army.¹⁰³ The army, it added, was above party and indifferent to who was in power. This loyalism of the army and its strength was a result of its hierarchical organization, Le Temps declared on the occasion of the 14th of July military parade,¹⁰⁴ from which Frenchmen

might well take a lesson. "Ils y verront l'exemple des heureux effets de l'ordre, de l'abnégation et de l'obéissance."¹⁰⁵ Following the parade, Le Temps stated that the Right might be proud of "l'armée de la République dont la bonne tenue et l'équipement moderne ont suscité l'admiration de la foule", but that the SFIO and the PC, who had never yet voted military credits, could claim no praise for it. The new-found patriotism of the PC, 'Néophytes de nationalisme',¹⁰⁶ was questioned.

A 14th of July mood was not always evident in Le Temps' appraisals of the army. It criticized the lack of co-ordination between the various branches of the armed forces, while advancing the hope that two Popular Front innovations, the placing of the Ministries of War, Air, and the Navy under the direction of the Minister of National Defence, and, the creation of a 'Centre des hautes études de la défense nationale', would help to correct the situation.¹⁰⁷ Supporting the arguments of de Gaulle and Paul Reynaud in favour of tank warfare and the creation of a professional army, Le Temps noted that although a beginning had been made in 1933 with the development of a light armoured division, this was not completely equipped yet and nothing had been done to

create tank divisions and all-terrain troop carriers. It contrasted this with the professionalization of the German army and its rapid building of tank divisions, concluding that the French army was in urgent need of a great programme of modernization.¹⁰⁸

On August 24, 1936, Hitler introduced a decree providing for two years military service, which, estimated *Le Temps*, would raise the effectives of his army to 1,750,000 men.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, it emphasized, France was in the middle of the "années creuses" and her death rate exceeded her birth rate; therefore the State must undertake a policy of encouraging an increase in natality. How? By abandoning the illusory politics of something-for-nothing, by ending the proletarianization of the middle classes, to restore the hopes and drives of the nation.

Qu'a fait jusqu'ici la France dans ces domaines? Où sont les stades où devrait s'entraîner sa jeunesse? Où en est -- hélas -- le patriotisme de ses instituteurs? Qu'a-t-elle fait pour lutter contre l'alcoolisme et la dépopulation? Qu'attend-elle enfin pour moderniser son armée et, à défaut du nombre qu'elle ne peut acquérir en quelques générations, pour créer l'instrument moderne qu'elle n'a pas encore su se donner avec les

divisions de choc indispensables pour résister aux panzerdivisionen, dont dispose déjà l'armée allemande.¹¹⁰

When Daladier announced an increase of fourteen billion in the arms budget, the creation of new armoured divisions, and an increased professionalization of the army, Le Temps was pleased, since, it said, this would mean that the armed forces would now be able to order massively, rather than by bits and pieces. But the Maginot line should be extended along the Belgian border, it added, and behind this a modern, mobile army should be held in readiness for instant destructive counter-attack.¹¹¹ Le Temps also called for the maintenance of a strong navy, because France must be prepared to defend herself on two seas; the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and because, being the second imperial power of the world, she must be in a position to defend her empire.¹¹²

Along with the repudiation of secret diplomacy and its adherence to the principle of collective security, the Popular Front also pledged itself to an appeal for the collaboration of the people in the maintenance of the peace. This electoral rhetoric was to gain an un-

expected significance during the summer of 1936, when 'the masses' attempted to exert pressure on the government to influence its foreign policy.

It all began on July 17th, when elements of the Spanish army revolted against the legitimate Republican government, the Spanish Popular Front. The revolt failed in most parts of Spain, but succeeded in Aragon, Navarre, Old Castile, León and Galicia, thus cutting the North of the country off from the South. Colonial troops, ferried across the Straits of Gibraltar in Italian and German aircraft, soon reinforced the insurgents. On Republican territory, popular revolution broke out, but only after the army insurrection,¹¹³ for the middle class ministry seemed to be too paralysed to move against the military revolt. Thus began a bloody civil war in which from 500,000 to one million Spaniards perished,¹¹⁴ with the anti-clerical Leftists ranged against the Catholic and conservative army. The Left and the Right in France immediately chose the side of their respective corresponding numbers abroad. The Right saw in the Republicans blood-stained bolsheviks, the Left in the rebels equally

blood-stained fascists.¹¹⁵ When the Republican government requested arms from France, Blum's first reaction was to acquiesce, but profound opposition from certain Radicals within his cabinet and from the British government forced him to revise his initial decision, or run the risk of undermining his government and losing his closest ally.¹¹⁶ On July 25th, Blum declared France's neutrality. The editorials of Le Temps during these days, arguing against shipping weapons to Spain, were unusually heated. Mentioning rumours that Blum intended to intervene in Spain, Le Temps predicted that any such action would end with a disastrous confrontation of Europe's rival mystiques if the fascist powers were to follow suit. Intervention was not spiritually possible for France. Le Temps affirmed itself to be certain, however, considering Blum's statements, that the Popular Front was not for export, that he would pursue the course of wisdom.¹¹⁷

When, on August 2nd, the government announced that it would issue an appeal for non-intervention agreement, it had not yet sent any arms to Spain.¹¹⁸ Yet, Le Temps chose to believe the contrary and it criticized the government for making France's diplomatic position

difficult by not sufficiently hiding the fact. It charged that non-parliamentary dignitaries of the Popular Front were being rather open about such aid, and urged government members to disassociate themselves from the statements of their followers.¹¹⁹ Between August 2nd and August 8th, France did send some war material to Spain, but on August 8th the cabinet reversed this policy and forbade further exports of arms to republican Spain, denouncing the Franco-Spanish commercial treaty of December, 1935.¹²⁰ If Blum disliked being forced to desert the Spanish government,¹²¹ the Communists, the CGT and elements of the SFIO were vociferous in their denunciation of the arms embargo.¹²² Le Temps, noting the government decision, as well as strong statements in favour of intervention¹²³ on the part of Duclos (Communist) and Jouhaux, warned that these contradictions could only tend to alarm public opinion and frighten investors. "peut-être y a-t-il de meilleurs moyens de gagner la confiance de la nation que de s'en aller discourir contre un des partis espagnol en présence et de célébrer 'la paix' en levant le poing."¹²⁴

The PC and the CGT were determined to make the

government change its policy with regard to Spain. They immediately inaugurated a series of mass meetings the length and breadth of France, multiplying petitions, resolutions of protests and telegrams, in an effort to convince the government that the people of France condemned its policy.¹²⁵ Le Temps was only too happy to be able to point out these serious divisions in the ranks of the governing coalition. When the National Committee of the Popular Front organized a 'Fête de la paix' on August 9, cries of 'des armes pour l'Espagne' rose from the crowd, while Communist and even a Socialist orator denounced the arms embargo. The government had spoken of the necessity of giving the lie to campaigns of false rumours, said Le Temps, and might begin by giving the lie to its most illustrious supporters.¹²⁶ On August 23rd, at a huge rally organized by the CGT in Lille, Radical, Socialist, CGT and Communist speakers attacked the government's Spanish policy. Given the divisions in the Popular Front and the strong interventionist pressure, argued Le Temps, Parliament and the government ought jointly to affirm their will for peace.¹²⁷ Other editorials entitled "Le 'Front'

tourbillonnaire" and "Pluralité de Front" mocked the divisions in the majority. Just who was running the Popular Front and what its policy was, Le Temps declared, was difficult to know from the conflicting statements of the three parties.¹²⁸

The main recipient of Le Temps' wrath among the dissenters was the PC, who, according to it, wanted nothing better than internal disorder and international war. This, in its opinion, was the motivation of their recently discovered patriotism.¹²⁹

À la vérité ils [the communists] poursuivent uniquement leur dessein de révolution, et pour réaliser ce dessein tout leur serait bon, même la guerre civile, même la guerre internationale. Ils sont les plus dangereux adversaires du gouvernement actuel, qu'ils travaillent sans cesse à compromettre, à désunir, à tromper, et à discréditer. Ils accusent leurs contradicteurs d'être 'les alliés des généraux espagnols félons, c'est à dire des agents de Hitler en France.' Cette calomnie abominable -- qui rejaillit sur le gouvernement lui-même -- est déjà une félonie.¹³⁰

Once again Le Temps was championing the government

against the Communists. The Communists denied at the time that they desired war¹³¹, and Thorez, in his memoirs, repeats the denial.

Les fascistes français prétendaient que nous voulions la guerre. Mensonge! Nous n'avons jamais préconisé l'intervention armée en Espagne, nous avons exigés qu'on fit cesser l'intervention fasciste. Nous avons protesté contre cette politique de prétendue neutralité qui mettait sur la même plan victimes et agresseurs, républicains et rebelles, et qui cédait constamment aux chantages des dictateurs fascistes, assurés de l'impunité.¹³²

The late summer of 1936 was indeed fertile in conflicts between the PC and the government. It was from these troubled days that "La rupture de la cohésion morale du Front populaire", in the words of Jacques Fauvet, began to become apparent.¹³³ When Schacht, of the Reichsbank, visited Paris in late August, and was given a dinner at which Blum and several other ministers were present, Thorez wrote Blum in protest that these "honneurs particuliers" given to the Nazi Finance Minister "ne semble pas conformes à la dignité de notre peuple et à la cause de la paix".¹³⁴ Le Temps, scoffing at the PC's pretention to be the spokesman of the French people,

argued that what most Frenchmen really wanted was peace, and would approve any honourable means of securing it.¹³⁵

A few days later the Communists were on the defensive when the Socialist and trade union internationals protested the treatment of Zinoviev and other accused in the Moscow trials. Dimitrov, of the Comintern, responded violently to this intervention of these "leaders réactionnaires" into the private affairs of the USSR. What of the Communists' own intercession with the French in favour of intervention in Spain, demanded Le Temps?¹³⁶

The implication^{was} that no Communist could be considered a true Frenchman, but merely an agent of the Third International.

Maurice Thorez provided the next shock, calling for a 'Front des français', that is, an all-party government, to better defend France against the external fascist menace. This appeal met with reserve from the Radicals, and with an immediate rejection from the SFIO.¹³⁷ Le Temps deduced that the PC move must have come as a result of orders from Stalin, orders which might well change in a different diplomatic conjuncture, concluding that there was more to be feared than gained

from a 'union nationale' containing the PC. What, asked Le Temps, would become of the Radicals in such a formation?¹³⁸ Yet, when the Radical, Camille Chautemps, had made a similar proposal to that of the Communists a month earlier, it had met with Le Temps' undisguised approval.¹³⁹ This would suggest that it was the fact that the Communists had advocated the 'Front des français' that frightened Le Temps more than the concept of an all-party government as such.

Blum, by now, was firm in his resolve to remain aloof from the civil war in Spain, for the principle of non-intervention had received the adherence of all major European powers, democracies and dictatorships alike (although the latter never ceased their active intervention in Spain) and the Non-Intervention Committee, which had been formed on Blum's initiative, was to hold its first meeting on September 9th. Realizing the profound popular discontent with his policy, he sought to justify it in a speech at an out-door political rally in Luna-Park on September 6th. Blum warned of the dangers of an arms race in Spain should France begin providing the Republicans with arms, he reminded his

audience of the non-intervention agreement, which would be a guarantee of peace in Europe. He then attacked Communist bellicosity and their project of a 'Front des français', concluding with an affirmation of fidelity to his party and the Popular Front.¹⁴⁰ Le Temps, while approving his will for peace, denounced the partisan formula in which it was expressed.¹⁴¹

On the 5th of September, a delegation of metallurgical workers interrupted a cabinet meeting to threaten the government with a strike to protest the Spanish arms embargo.¹⁴² Blum replied that if the CGT disagreed with his policy, they ought to inform him of this, that he would take their opinion into consideration since they were a component of the Popular Front, and that a strike would be quite useless. While applauding Blum's firmness and affirming that any intervention in Spain would mean total ideological war, Le Temps was angered by the fact that Blum had consented to receive the delegation and had promised to take into consideration the views of those who were not the elected representatives of the nation. It fulminated against the illegal and dangerous agitation, Communist in inspiration, for an intervention which

neither the government nor the great majority of Frenchmen wanted.¹⁴³ The strike took place on the 7th. According to Le Temps, it was a success; according to the Minister of the Interior, Salengro, it was a failure.¹⁴⁴ At any rate, said Le Temps, the CGT has dropped its apolitical front and shown itself to be a tool of the PC. If the government were to give in to such pressure, Le Temps warned, it would be the end of the parliamentary regime in France, as the irresponsible masses would have been shown to be in control rather than the deputies and ministers. The dictatorship of the proletariat would be instituted.¹⁴⁵

In the second week of September a new wave of sit-down strikes began, different in character from the first, according to Georges Lefranc.

... on doit constater que la guerre civile d'Espagne maintient un état de fébrilité qui, s'ajoutant à d'autres facteurs, paralyse la production. En parti spontanées, en parti entretenues, durcies par la résistance du patronat, aggravées par la concurrence entre les militants syndicaux, les grèves se prolongent; elles n'ont plus la tonalité joyeuse qui les avait caractérisées au printemps. Peu à peu la hargne s'installe.¹⁴⁶

If the Communists were partially responsible, they were not alone. Guérin indicates that the 'Gauche révolutionnaire' of the SFIO was doing all that it could to inaugurate a new wave of strikes, which might be turned into the long-awaited Revolution.¹⁴⁷

On September 13th, Le Temps took note of the renewed strike activity, which was political in inspiration, it emphasized, although the workers and their representatives refused to admit that the real cause was Spain. Then in a more rational frame of mind, it outlined some of the undoubtedly unfortunate economic results.

Dès maintenant comment pourrait-on concevoir ce redressement, alors que des grèves incessantes, pour les motives les plus futiles, désorganisent la vie de l'usine, empêchent toute prévision, contraignent nos industriels à vivre au jour le jour avec l'inquiétude du lendemain? Comment accepter des commandes, établir des délais de livraison, alors qu'à tout moment l'indiscipline dans le travail, sur un mot d'ordre venu de l'extérieur, peut arrêter la production?¹⁴⁸

The sit-down strikes, it was again argued, were a violation of the right to work. "Dans une entreprise quelconque, il suffit de quelques syndiqués cégétistes

pour arrêter la production et imposer leur volonté à tous leurs camarades."¹⁴⁹ The strikes were spreading, said Le Temps, as though according to some plan, some secret order. Unwittingly indicating that the employers were perhaps partially to blame, Le Temps reported a sit-down strike in a Lille textile factory in which government arbitration had failed because of ill-feeling between employer and workers. What had happened, it queried, to that 'joie de travail' which Leon Blum had said would bring about the upswing in production necessary for the success of the Popular Front experiment?¹⁵⁰ Le Temps warned that the pretensions of the workers could and would lead to a proletarianization of society, and a weakening of that hierarchical social base on which any society, any civilization must rest.¹⁵¹

When Daladier suggested that the strikes were being fomented by agents provocateurs of foreign powers (presumably, he was referring to Italy and Germany), Le Temps countered that, if this overly simplistic explanation were true, why did Blum not unmask them and put an end to their work? Because he knew, charged Le Temps, that his own friends and supporters were to blame. The condition of Blum's success lay not in appeals for wisdom,

but in a strict enforcement of legality,¹⁵² it continued, quoting the president of the Senate. "L'autorité ne se demande pas, elle se prend".

In Alsace, a newspaper of the autonomist Heimatbund published a manifesto, warning that Alsatians would take matters into their own hands if disorders continued. The manifesto also contained the phrase, 'better Hitler than Moscow'. Le Temps was scandalized -- France would avoid both Hitler and Moscow. It castigated the clerical autonomists of the Heimatbund, who in other days had allied with the Communists, who today, profiting from the local appreciation of order, authority and religion, were crying out against the bolshevization of France. It was understandable to oppose the government, but to seize this as a pretext for being against France was inadmissible to Le Temps.¹⁵³

Perhaps, Le Temps permitted itself to hope, the Radicals were finally realizing, now that the first euphoria of the Popular Front victory was over, that their alliance with the Communists was bringing the country ever closer to revolution and ruin.

Mais que penser de la naïveté de ceux que le communisme embrasse, non sans dédain, sous le dénomination 'd'éléments modérés du Front populaire'? Se laisseront-ils infiniment 'utiliser' contre la République? Cette question revient constamment dans nos articles ¹⁵⁴ parce qu'elle domine depuis longtemps, et de plus en plus toute la politique française. Le moment où elle devra être enfin résolue ne saurait plus tarder. ¹⁵⁵

Footnotes to Chapter 3

1. For details of the strike, I am indebted to the excellent study done by Danos and Gibelin, Juin '36.
2. From an article in Le Populaire, 27, May, 1936, reproduced in Guérin, op. cit., pp. 301-304.
3. Le Temps, 28 May, 1936.
4. Ibid., 4 June, 1936.
5. Ibid., 29 May, 1936.
6. Ibid., 30 May, 1936.
7. R. Belin, La Flèche de Paris, 4 July, 1936. See also Ehrmann, op. cit., p. 11, who writes, "The entirely spontaneous nature of the strike -- was obvious to all who had been in close contact with the events.
8. J. Berlioz, "Une leçon de l'expérience du Front populaire," Cahiers du communisme (January 1948), quoted in Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 175.
9. Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 191
10. H. de Kérillis, Français, voici la guerre! Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1936, pp. 55-56.
11. G. Lefranc, "Problématique des grèves françaises de 1936: Bilan provisoire d'une quête de témoignages," Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire Moderne, No. 3 (1966), p. 4.
12. Chastenet, op. cit., pp. 153-154.
13. Walter, op. cit., pp. 312-313.
14. A. Prost, La CGT à l'époque du Front populaire, Paris, Armand Collin, 1964, pp. 38, 49-50, and Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 197.
15. Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 73.
16. Le Temps, 2 June, 1936.
17. Ibid., 5 June, 1936

18. Blum, Léon Blum devant la Cour, p. 100.
19. Le Temps, 6-7 June, 1936.
20. Ehrmann, op. cit., p. 24, Goguel, op. cit., p. 385, and Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 79.
21. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 162.
22. J. Joll, "The Front Populaire After 30 Years", JCH, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1966), p. 37.
23. Ibid., Goguel, op. cit., p. 386, Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 282, Guérin, op. cit., p. 12, Debu-Bridel, op. cit., p. 363, Kérillis, op. cit., pp. 55-56, Maxence, op. cit., pp. 359-361, G. Wright, France in Modern Times, 1760 to the Present, p. 485. A. Delmas, quoted on p. 93 of Danos and Gibelin, declares: "...cette grève est bien le début classique d'une révolution."
24. Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
25. Cited in Guérin, op. cit., p. 113.
26. See Lafranc's comments, Lefranc., Histoire du Front populaire, p. 163, and my concluding chapter.
27. Le Temps, 9 June, 1936.
28. Ibid., 10 June, 1936.
29. Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., pp. 95-100.
30. Cited in E. Dolléans, Histoire du mouvement ouvrier. tome 3: De 1921 à nos jours, Paris, Armand Colin, 1953, p. 391.
31. Ligou, op. cit., p. 419.
32. Guérin, op. cit., pp. 119-125.
33. Le Temps, 11 June, 1936.
34. This was actually a part of the PC's Popular Front terminology, and their slogan at the time was "Tout pour le Front populaire, tout par le Front populaire. See J. Chambax, Le Front populaire pour le pain, la liberté et la paix, Paris, Editions Sociales, 1962, p. 155.

35. Le Temps, 12 June, 1936.
36. Walter, op. cit., p. 320.
37. The CGT appeal to the workers of June 21, 1936,
quoted in Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., pp. 143-144.
38. Le Temps, 13 June, 1936.
39. Ibid., 14 June, 1936.
40. Danos and Gibelin, op. cit., p. 135.
41. Le Temps, 30 June, 1936.
42. Ibid., 23 June, 1936.
43. Ibid., 29 June, 1936.
44. Ibid., 26 June, 1936.
45. Ibid., 27 June, 1936.
46. Ibid., 28 June, 1936.
47. A. Ayache, "Les grèves de juin '36 au Maroc," Annales,
Vol. 12 (1957), p. 429, and Danos and Gibelin, op.
cit., pp. 136-137.
48. Le Temps, 23 June, 1936.
49. Ibid., 5 July, 1936.
50. Ibid., 25 June, 1936.
51. Werth, op. cit., p. 81.
52. Le Temps, 20 June, 1936.
53. Ibid., 4 July, 1936.
54. Ibid., 9 July, 1936.
55. Ibid., 12, July, 1936.
56. Ibid., 22 July, 1936.
57. Ibid., 6-7 June, 1936.

58. J. Gicquel and L. Sfez, Problèmes de la réforme de l'état en France depuis 1934, Paris, PUF, 1965, pp. 147-148, Colton, op. cit., p. 142, and Audry, op. cit., pp. 32-33.
59. A. Delmas, A gauche de la barricade. Chronique syndicale de l'avant-guerre, Paris, Editions de l'Héxagone, 1950, p. 85.
60. See Audry, op. cit., p. 30.
61. Le Temps, 8 June, 1936.
62. See above, p.99 of this chapter.
63. Le Temps, 28 May, 1936.
64. Ibid., 20 August, 1936.
65. Ibid., 31 July, 1936.
66. Ibid., 12 August, 1936.
67. Ibid., 30 July, 1936.
68. Ibid., 8 June, 1936.
69. Ibid., 17, 18, 19 June, 28 July, 1936.
70. Ibid., 8 July, 1 August, 1936.
71. Dupeux, Le Front populaire, p. 36.
72. League of Nations, Economic Intelligence Service, Statistical Year-Book (1940-1941), Geneva, 1941, p. 171, 180.
73. Le Temps, 7, 21 August, 3 September, 1936.
74. Ibid., 25 September, 1936.
75. Speech to the American Club, Le Populaire, February 23, 1937, cited in Colton, op. cit., p. 161.
76. Le Temps, 19 June, 1936.
77. Ibid., 23 May, 6 July, 2, 16 August, 1936

78. See K. A. Doukas, "Armaments and the French Experiment," American Political Science Review, Vol. 33 (1939), pp. 289-291.
79. Lefranc. Histoire du Front populaire, p. 173.
80. Le Temps, 17 July, 2 August 1936.
81. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 171-172.
82. Le Temps, 21 June, 22 August 1936.
83. Ibid., 26 August 1936.
84. S. B. Clough, "Retardative Factors in French Economic Development in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," Journal of Economic History, Vol. 6s(1946), p. 100.
85. Le Temps, 20 June, 1 September, 1936.
86. Ibid., 20 August 1936.
87. Ibid., 10 September, 1936.
88. The four were the Croix de feu, the Jeunesses patriotes, the Solidarite française, and the Francistes.
89. Le Temps, 20 June, 1 July 1936.
90. Ibid., 2 July 1936.
91. Ibid., 22 June, 1936.
92. Ibid., 4 July 1936.
93. Ibid., 4 September, 1936.
94. See Lefranc. Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 297-301.
95. Le Temps, 18 June, 1936.
96. Ibid., 30 July, 1936.
97. Ibid., 18 June 1936.
98. Ibid., 5,6,8 August 1936. Actually the speeches of the delegates were much more moderate in tone than Le Temps would give to understand. For a discussion of the affair see Delmas, op. cit., pp. 123-124, and B.J. Jackson, "The French Left and National Education, 1919-1939", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic

- University of America, 1963. Jackson points out that the atmosphere of the Congress was quieter than in previous years. p. 125.
99. Le Temps, 28 August, 1936.
 100. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 443.
 101. A. Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars, New York, Harcourt, 1940, p. 32.
 102. P. M. de la Gorce, The French Army, a Military-Political History, tr. Kenneth Douglas, New York, Brazillier, 1963, p. 263.
 103. Le Temps, 11 July, 1936. That the PC was not entirely unjustified was soon to be demonstrated by the Cagoule conspiracy.
 104. Werth, op. cit., p. 111, calls the military parade of July 14, 1936, the most impressive that France had seen in years, which served its purpose of demonstrating the efficiency of the French army. These words, of course, were written before 1940.
 105. Le Temps, 14-15 July, 1936.
 106. Ibid., 16, 20 July, 1936. When Le Temps accused the PC of being vulgar neophytes of nationalism, it was borrowing a figure of speech from Blum, who had called the supporters of Laval 'neophytes of pacifism' during the foreign policy debate of December 27th, 1935, on the subject of the Hoare-Laval agreements. See Marcus, op. cit., p. 159.
 107. Le Temps, 13 June, 7 September, 1936.
 108. Ibid., 24 August, 14 September, 1936.
 109. This was something of an exaggeration, for in early 1938, the German army counted only 1,510,000 men, according to P. Renouvin, Histoire des Relations Internationales, tome i: Les crises du vingtième siècle. II: 1929-1945, Paris, Hachette, 1958, p. 143.
 110. Le Temps, 27 August, 1936.

111. Ibid., 16 September, 1936. These arguments were precisely those used by de Gaulle. Cf. C. de Gaulle, Mémoires de guerre, tome 1: L'Appel, 1940-1942, Paris, Plon, 1954, pp. 9-17.
112. Le Temps, 1 October, 1936.
113. See Thomas, op. cit., pp. 227, 244-263
114. Thomas prefers the lower figure. Ibid., p. 790
115. Plummyène and Lasierra, op. cit., pp. 136-137. In its 'Bulletin de la journée', Le Temps openly sided with Franco (Le Temps, BJ, 24 July, 1936), but in its domestic editorial, it tended to be more circumspect.
116. Cf. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 186, Joll, op. cit., p. 39, M. Réberiou, "Léon Blum, chef du gouvernement," Annales, Vol. 20, pt. 2 (1965), p. 1211, Gurein, op. cit., pp. 153-156, and R. A. Friedlander, "Great Power Politics and Spain's Civil War," The Historian, Vol. 28 (Nov. 1962) p. 80-82.
117. Le Temps, 26, 27 July, 1936, See also Ibid, 13 August, 1936.
118. Thomas, op. cit., p. 305.
119. Le Temps, 3 August, 1936.
120. Chambaz, op. cit., p. 170, and Thomas, op. cit., pp. 331-332.
121. Weber, Action Française, p. 382, feels that the French public saw Leon Blum's backing down on the issue of sending arms to Spain as a victory for the Right wing press. A.J.P. Taylor in The Origins of the Second World War, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965, p. 157 and Friedlander, op. cit., p. 95, argue that if Hitler and Mussolini had been challenged over Spain, they would have withdrawn.
122. G. G. Windell, "Léon Blum and the Crisis over Spain, 1936," The Historian, Vol. 24 (Aug. 1962) pp. 435-436.
123. In Le Temps' terminology, the word intervention meant the renewed shipment of arms to Spain, rather than actual armed intervention.

124. Le Temps, 9 August, 1936.
125. See Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 190-192, and Windell, op. cit., passim. This campaign, says Lefranc awakened "...une profonde résonance dans les milieux populaires, particulièrement à Paris et dans le Midi Aquitain."
126. Le Temps, 10, 12 August, 1936.
127. Ibid., 24 August, 1936.
128. Ibid., 19, 25, 26 August, 1936.
129. Ibid., 17, 23 August, 1936.
130. Ibid., 21 August, 1936.
131. Ibid., 19 August, 1936.
132. Thorez, Fils du peuple, p. 139.
133. Fauvet, op. cit., p. 205.
134. See Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 193 for the full text of the letter.
135. Le Temps, 28, 29 August, 1936.
136. Ibid., 30 August, 1936.
137. Lefranc. Histoire du Front populaire, p. 195.
138. Le Temps, 2, 3 September, 1936.
139. Ibid., 4 August, 1936.
140. Blum, Oeuvres, Vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 390-396.
141. Le Temps, 8 September, 1936.
142. Windell, op. cit., p. 437, hints at Communist inspiration
143. Le Temps, 6, 7 September, 1936.
144. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 192.
145. Le Temps, 9, 11 September, 1936.

- 146. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 198-199.
- 147. Le Temps, 24 September, 1936, Guérin, op. cit., p. 137.
- 148. Le Temps, 13 September, 1936.
- 149. Ibid., 17 September, 1936.
- 150. Ibid., 15 September, 1936.
- 151. Ibid., 20 September, 1936.
- 152. Ibid., 23 September, 1936. At the time, the government was experimenting with the neutralization of factories, the plants being evacuated during a 'strike and management was not allowed to operate them. See Colton, op. cit., p. 190.
- 153. Le Temps, 9, 16 September, 1936.
- 154. This is no overstatement. Cf. Le Temps, 8, 16 June, 3, 7, 18, 21, 24, July, 1, 14, 31 August, 12, 14, 18, 21, September, 1936.
- 155. Ibid., 4 October, 1936.

C H A P T E R F O U R

For Want of Confidence

(i) Discord and Devaluation

On June 6th, 1936, Léon Blum had stated:

Le pays n'a pas à attendre de nous, ni à redouter de nous que nous couvrions, un beau matin, les murs des affiches blanches de la dévaluation, des affiches blanches d'un coup d'État monétaire. Ce n'est pas notre pensée. Ce n'est pas notre intention.¹

On September 25th, 1936, the British, French, and American governments announced that they had agreed on a currency realignment which included approval of the French devaluation of between 25 and 35 per cent. This complete about-face on the part of the government had been made imperative by continued labour unrest which brought about a continual and alarming flight of gold and currency abroad, and by the failure of government bonds to find buyers.² Manipulation of the discount rate was an expedient which was powerless to strengthen faith in the currency, and exchange controls, today virtually everywhere in existence, were generally rejected as a totalitarian measure, unworthy of a democracy. Wynne points

out that "... the depreciation of sterling and the devaluation of the dollar left the franc overvalued as against these currencies", which frightened away tourists and maintained an increasingly unfavourable balance of trade.³ According to economists, there are three possible ways of counter-acting such a situation; deflation, exchange controls, and devaluation.⁴ The first remedy was out of the question as it was the very negation of Popular Front economic philosophy, the second was politically impossible, given the attitude of the Radical party.⁵ Devaluation, put off for as long as possible, could no longer be avoided and, indeed, it has been asserted that the government had envisaged the measure from the very beginning.⁶

Le Temps, commenting on the government decision, did not fail to recall Blum's words of June 6 to its readers. It went on to charge that the monetary alignment was not a monetary alignment at all, since England and the United States had not promised not to devalue their own currencies further still,⁷ to which Alexander Werth responds:

The Temps said that the Three-Power Declaration was largely a put-up show, of small practical

value. Actually, the Declaration was of some importance, both practical and moral. It eliminated the danger of a currency war, and of tariff reprisals against devaluation; and the lead taken by the three democracies against autarchy had its moral significance.⁸

The real reason for the devaluation, according to Le Temps, was that it was forced upon the government by the failure of the Popular Front's own policies. Le Temps condemned a devaluation which would be operated without accompanying deflationary measures.

Le dévaluation suppose un changement de méthodes. C'est à cette condition seulement qu'elle peut devenir, à la faveur d'un renouveau de confiance, générateur de mouvements de capitaux favorables, le point de départ d'un redressement durable.⁹

Never a fervent champion of devaluation, Le Temps argued that if a devaluation was to be carried out, the government ought to at least ensure its success.

Car il ne suffit pas de dévaluer pour qu'automatiquement la monnaie soit sauvée et la trésorerie soulagée, pour que les affaires reprennent d'elles-mêmes; il faut que soit, de surcroît, remplies d'autres conditions

permettant à la dévaluation de sortir ses quelques effets provisoirement favorables et, surtout, mettant les pouvoirs à même d'en pallier les conséquences les plus fâcheuses.¹⁰

These 'autres conditions' were a return to policies of financial deflation, social order and political calm, the previous lack of which had brought on the necessity of devaluation. The government, warned Le Temps, must now use its authority to repress CGT and Communist agitation.¹¹

Opposition to devaluation was evident among the Radicals, and the Communists were also angered by the measure which they felt could have been avoided had the government been willing to tax the rich. The government was subject to pressure from the PC for measures to parry the blow of devaluation for the working classes as well as pressure of the opposite sort from the Senate Radicals. Le Temps was critical of a good deal of the complementary legislation which accompanied the devaluation. The proposed sliding scale for salaries, to be tied to the cost of living (rejected in the end by the Senate), was criticized on several counts; it would bring about a spiralling increase in wages and prices, no one could agree on the best method of calculating the cost of

living, and should the cost of living drop, the workers were likely to accept a decrease in wages. Peasants and persons living on a fixed income from pensions and investments would be put at a disadvantage.¹² It predicted, quite correctly, that the penalties to be imposed on hoarders of gold would be ineffective and would serve only to inhibit the return of gold to France. Only the announced tariff reductions elicited the grudging approval of Le Temps, which predicted that continued inflation would cause further monetary disequilibrium, forcing the government to raise tariffs again. Liberalism in international trade would be ineffective without a return to liberalism in the national economy as well. Le Temps did not comment on the government's restoration of certain earlier cuts in veterans pensions or on compensation accorded to small bond-holders. No doubt such measures were difficult to criticize.

As the year 1936 neared its end, the solidarity of the Popular Front seemed badly shaken, and Le Temps eagerly sought to emphasize the contradictions and the profound fissures in the coalition. It tried to demonstrate that, as in Sennap's cartoon,¹³ as long as the Popular Front

survived, the Radicals risked being devoured by the Socialists, and that both would ultimately be the victims of the Communists.

The 1936 Congress of the Radical party was held in Biarritz from the 22nd to the 25th of October, whereas that of the preceding year had been held in Paris, the latter being quite Left-wing in tone, the former almost reactionary. Larmour attributes this to the location of the Congress -- Paris delegates were more radical and would be more numerous at a congress held in their city, while the opposite was true at Biarritz.¹⁴ The congress was turbulent and nearly turned out to be a rejection of the Popular Front, if not the Blum government. An attitude of virulent anti-communism characterized many of the delegations.¹⁵ Prior to the congress, Le Temps, little suspecting the conservative atmosphere that was to reign, limited itself to the wish that the party would adopt proportional representation.¹⁶ When Daladier, finding himself under attack at the congress, sought to defend the Radical party's adhesion to the Popular Front, declaring: "... les temps actuels ne se prêtent plus aux jeux subtils de la politique traditionnelle", Le Temps took up the banner of

of the conservative Radicals. "... aucun républicain peut faire aussi bon marché de nos institutions. Le dilemme n'est pas acceptable. Entre la révolution et le fascisme, il y a quelque chose. Et ce quelque chose, c'est le fonctionnement normal du régime, c'est tout simplement la République."¹⁷ Le Temps took a good deal of satisfaction in noting the Right-wing tenor of the congress, which had so exceeded its hopes. "Le Congres de Biarritz, quoi qu'on decide officiellement aujourd'hui ou demain, est et restera une manifestation anticomuniste."¹⁸

Several days before the congress, the PC had addressed a very formal letter of salutation to the Radical party, the tone of which was nothing if not nationalist and full of good-will toward the middle classes. Le Temps had commented that such duplicity would soon be evident to everyone, including the Radicals, who were its principal victims.

Il s'agit, en un mot, de maintenir à tout prix le Front populaire, parce que, conformément à la tactique la plus certaine de la troisième Internationale, qui n'en fait d'ailleurs nul mystère, 'l'union des gauches' permet seul à la révolution marxiste d'utiliser commodément à ses fins la libéralisme 'bourgeois' et la

simplicité 'petite bourgeoise'.¹⁹

Indeed, Le Temps affected to find it extraordinary that the Radicals and Socialists in the government continued to accept the support of the PC, who, in its estimation, was so obviously attempting to discredit its allies.

En fait, sur tous les points, dans tous les cas, avec une froide résolution, une persévérance inlassable et une incroyable mauvaise foi, les communistes, depuis six mois, ont 'saboté' les efforts du cabinet, mettant en oeuvre leur tactique bien continue qui consiste à soutenir officiellement les gouvernements de gauche tout en les condamnant à l'échec, de manière à entretenir un état de désordre favorable à leurs desseins.²⁰

Le Temps argued that the PC was a subversive faction, not a party. Therefore if the reconstituted Right-wing leagues were to be suppressed, the PC ought to receive the same treatment.²¹ As long as the Popular Front government remained the union of two contradictory elements, legality and illegality, it would be impossible for it to govern in a normal fashion. As it was, Le Temps asserted, the Popular Front was governing in the interests of one class, and hence against the nation as a whole.²²

To rectify this situation, the Communists would have to be eliminated from the governing majority. "La nation française a besoin de s'accorder avec elle-même, et par conséquent d'éliminer tout ce qui la désaccorde, hommes, partis, et comme on dit maintenant, 'idéologies'.²³

Le Temps did not feel that the PC ought to be allowed to hold meetings at all,²⁴ therefore it was particularly unhappy when the Communists asked for permission to organize some 120 meetings in Alsace-Lorraine. The government's general policy in Alsace-Lorraine met with Le Temps' approval²⁵, and now it exhorted the government to outlaw the Communists' projected activities in this sensitive border area. Blum, in effect, forbade all but three of the meetings, which did not endear him to Thorez.

"Les hommes des deux cents familles et les agents d'Hitler s'employèrent à exciter les alsaciens contre les communistes. 'Autonomistes', croix de feu, camelots du roi, antisémites et réactionnaires s'étaient coalisés contre nous. Les préfets des trois départements envoyèrent à Paris des rapports, demandant l'interdiction de nos meetings. Cédant volontiers aux injonctions fascistes, Blum n'autorisa que trois réunions.²⁶

If the government's action irritated the Communists, it failed to satisfy or to impress Le Temps.

Pense-t-on du côté gouvernemental, avoir obtenu dans cette affaire un succès politique, profitable avant le congrès du parti radical, par une manifestation de volonté et d'autorité? En fait les communistes qui en apparence auraient cédé, n'ont nullement renoncé à leur politique de duplicité à l'égard du Front populaire.²⁷

During this period, Communists and Socialists exchanged sharp recriminations. The PC was dissatisfied with the lack of vigour shown by the Blum government, and the Socialists were angered by Communist criticisms. Although a solid front was maintained in the Chamber, the SFIO felt that in the country at large the Communists were undermining confidence in the government.²⁸ On October 30th, Thorez harshly attacked what he considered to be the abject spinelessness of the government, which repeatedly allowed the Right to get the better of it. "Les difficultés que connaît le gouvernement de Front populaire sont le résultat des défaillances, des reculs, des complicités du gouvernement devant le fascisme, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur."²⁹ Chambaz indicates more explicitly the disgust of his party with the government in almost all areas of its activity.

Le gouvernement, après avoir dissous les ligues factieuses, tolère qu'elles poursuivent leurs provocations à l'abri des partis politiques qu'elles ont constitués.

Sur le plan économique et social, il cède peu à peu aux pressions du patronat qui organise le sabotage de la monnaie et de la production...et faute de vouloir frapper la fortune acquise, il procède à une première dévaluation.

Au mépris de l'intérêt national et de la solidarité internationale, il frappe dans le dos la République espagnole. ³⁰

How, Le Temps queried, could a man like Blum, who knew the Communists well, have agreed to govern with them in the first place? The real cause of the Communist ire was, in its opinion, Blum's Spanish policy. He had, said Le Temps "...commis l'erreur inexpiable d'avoir essayé de maintenir la paix européenne." ³¹ Thorez's speech caused only a momentary furor, for an unexpected event led the Left to close ranks once more.

The occasion was the suicide of Roger Salengro, the Socialist Minister of the Interior. His nerves frayed by false accusations of desertion to the enemy during the war which were being bandied about by the extreme Right-wing press and by Rightist deputies (the Chambers had re-

convened on November 15th), Salengro took his own life on November 18th.³² The effect on the majority was to galvanize it into an attitude of indignation and of solidarity against the Right, demonstrating once again the ability of anti-fascism to unite the Left when all else had failed.

On the eve of the reconvening of the Chambers, Le Temps had urged the opposition to be more aggressive³³, and after the suicide it showed no evidence of being particularly dismayed by the results of this increased aggressiveness. Instead of the few words of compassion that might have been expected under the circumstances, Le Temps mentions the suicide only to accuse the Left of using it to excite internal discord.

Il serait urgent de mettre une soudine à nos querelles pour porter toute notre attention sur le maintien de nos droits et les garanties de notre sécurité. Que viennent faire alors ces accusations, ces dénonciations, ces violences dont les journaux révolutionnaires menacent leurs contradicteurs.³⁴

The phrase "le maintien de nos droits" alluded to the government's plans to take immediate action to provide legislation to punish purveyors of slander and false information in the press. Le Temps averred its opposition to any limitation of the liberty of the press, and in particular

to the measure passed by the legislature on December 8th.

On éprouve un serrement de coeur à constater que les mesures proposés par le cabinet du Front populaire rappellent, jusque dans le détail, celles qui avaient si longtemps dressées dans notre pays contre les régimes du pouvoir personnel et les gouvernements de réaction toute l'opinion libérale, tous les défenseurs de la pensée libre.³⁵

Le Temps concluded characteristically,

Constitué pour soi-disant 'sauver la République', le Front populaire en enfreint la doctrine et déroge gravement à sa tradition.³⁶

This accusation of illiberalism was not an isolated one. In other editorials Le Temps accused the government of undermining the independence of the judiciary,³⁷ of misusing the public broadcasting system,³⁸ of partisanship in the election of officials in the Chamber of Deputies,³⁹ and of attempting to govern by decree (Le Temps opposed the granting of decree powers to what it called a partisan government, but not to a government of 'union nationale').⁴⁰

After the Salengro affair had died down the Communists resumed their criticisms of the government's policies with regard to Spain. On the occasion of the critical foreign policy debate of December 4th, the

Communists abstained in a vote of confidence. For the first time, the Popular Front majority in the Chamber had split, but Blum, after consultations with his cabinet decided not to resign. On the 5th and the 7th of December, both the CGT⁴¹ and the PC made it clear again that they were in violent opposition to the foreign policy of the Blum government, while reaffirming their loyal support of the government in the application of the Popular Front programme.⁴²

Le Temps responded sharply to the campaign of "...un communisme qui veut entraîner la France dans la guerre civile espagnole..."⁴³ and which forced the government to continually go beyond the programme of the Popular Front "pour se faire pardonner".⁴⁴

Unexpectedly, Le Temps congratulated Blum for not resigning. By remaining in power in the face of Communist censure, it declared, Blum had returned to a legalist concept of government.

...nous approuvons fort M. Léon Blum de n'avoir point cédé à leur premier assaut sur le terrain parlementaire. Nous dirions même qu'il est rentré ainsi dans la vérité constitutionnelle, qu'il s'est dégagé de la prise du "gouvernement des masses", dont il prétendaient jusqu'ici, et solennellement, reconnaître le souveraineté.⁴⁵

When Jouhaux of the CGT stated on December 7th that, in spite of the government, the CGT was doing and will continue to do all that it could to aid the Spanish Republicans, Le Temps commented with satisfaction. "La vérité est que M. Léon Blum ne gouverne plus et ne peut plus gouverner en communion avec les 'masses' dont les agitateurs patentés, en ce qui concerne les affaires d'Espagne, se séparent nettement de lui." ⁴⁶

If Le Temps was able to point to severe strains between the government and the Communists, the disassociation of the Radical party from the Popular Front which it had consistently hoped and predicted seemed as far away as ever. Le Temps noted with disgust on November 24th that in a recent election for the Paris city council a Communist had been elected with Radical support. In mid-December the Radicals, whose Executive Council had recently met, were still speaking as though all were for the best in the Popular Front, noted Le Temps. While the situation in the country might still be distorted, it added, "Du congrès de Biarritz au comité exécutif radical de cette nuit, la mainmise révolutionnaire sur le gouvernement de Front populaire s'est aggravée et M. Daladier ne l'ignore pas." ⁴⁷ This

charge of growing Communist influence is hard to reconcile with other statements of nine days earlier concerning the Communist failure to influence the government's Spanish policy. In the interval, however, the PC and the SFIO had reconciled their difference, and Le Temps affirmed that it was certain that the SFIO must have made dangerous concessions to the Communists.⁴⁸

While the moral unity of the Popular Front seemed somewhat shaken, it was able to continue its legislative activity, although the cadence of this activity was diminishing. The first area of activity to be considered here is, strictly speaking, administrative rather than legislative; the government's relations with its employees. Popular Front orators had promised to 'faire souffler un vent républicain dans la haute administration', something which was easier to promise than to effect since French law protects civil servants from arbitrary action on the part of the government.⁴⁹ For this reason executive measures to purify the upper civil service of elements hostile to the Popular Front were not extensive enough to satisfy many of the government's supporters. On November 8th, Marceau Pivert, at a meeting of the SFIO National

charge of growing Communist influence is hard to reconcile with other statements of nine days earlier concerning the Communist failure to influence the government's Spanish policy. In the interval, however, the IC and the SPLO had reconciled their differences, and de Tanga affirmed that it was understood that the SPLO had made no progress in its negotiations with the Communist Party. While the Popular Front of the Republic is not named, it was able to coordinate the legislative activity, although the evidence of this activity was diminishing. The first area of activity to be considered here is, actually speaking, administrative rather than legislative: the government's relations with its employees. Popular Front orders had promised to 'fairly' settle up with republican gains in administrative positions, something which was easier to promise than to effect since French law protects civil servants from arbitrary action on the part of the government. For this reason executive measures to purify the upper civil service of elements hostile to the Popular Front were not extensive enough to satisfy many of the government's supporters. On November 25, Marceau Rivert, at a meeting of the SPLO National

Council, exhorted the government to act. Le Temps responded with a warning that this sort of purification could only result in the undermining of the neutrality of the administration.⁵⁰ It also attacked a proposal by the Civil Servants Unions that the government accept the collaboration of a committee of the union to serve in an advisory capacity in each ministry. The real purpose of the proposal, Le Temps argued, was to force the government to proceed with the republican purge of the upper administration.⁵¹ Jardillier, the Socialist PTT (Postes, Téléphones et Télégraphes) Minister, actually made use of such a commission and Le Temps did not spare its criticisms. When the Minister thus attributed a part of the authority of the State to members of an illegal union, Le Temps declared, then the State was menaced. "Il s'agit en somme de savoir si les ministres investis du pouvoir exécutif ont le droit de laisser déposséder l'Etat de ses attributions, en permettant, disons le mot, le soviétisation des services." ⁵² Le Temps was also highly critical of the idea, mooted at the Radical Biarritz Congress, of an 'Ecole Supérieure d'Administration Publique', which would supposedly form loyal republican administrators, and which Le Temps characterized as an 'atelier d'orthodoxie'.⁵³

Throughout the early winter of 1936-37 Le Temps continued to complain of intermittent but persistent sit-down strikes,⁵⁴ the responsibility for which lay at the door of the Communists. The Communists, it reasoned, had two objectives. The first was to intimidate the government to modify its foreign policy. "Les grèves économiques, d'ailleurs fomentées et dirigées par le parti communiste, se transforment en grèves politiques." The second aim of the PC was to weaken the social structure of the country and undermine the authority of the employers, and in this they were abetted by government experiments such as the neutralization of strike-bound enterprises, Le Temps added,

C'est le glissement continu et rapide vers la suppression de la propriété individuelle; c'est tout simplement l'application de la doctrine socialiste et communiste -- il n'y a aucune différence entre elles -- de socialisation des moyens de production et d'échange.⁵⁵

When Blum reaffirmed that he would use constraint to end a sit-down strike only after all else had failed, Le Temps complained that while his foreign policy declarations were as 'national' as could be hoped for, his formulae in

discussing domestic problems were always highly partisan. "Quand il s'agit de résoudre des questions dites sociales, le chef du gouvernement s'oblige à ne considérer que les intérêts d'un groupe, d'un parti, d'une classe."⁵⁶ The government's conciliatory manner of dealing with strikes, said Le Temps, was interpreted as weakness by disorderly elements and only succeeded in making them bolder.⁵⁷

Le gouvernement du Front populaire a toléré, encouragé, non seulement des atteints à l'autorité des patrons et des cadres de l'industrie, mais même à la sienne propre et à celle de la loi. On dirait qu'il essayait, tout au moins auprès de masses, à remplacer le commandement par la recommandation, l'autorité par la persuasion.

The government itself, of course, desired to appease the strike activity as well, and as early as September, at the urging of the CGT, it began to study the feasibility of compulsory arbitration. The government preferred, however, to deal with the strikes in a less heavy-handed manner by trying to get the CGPF and the CGT to agree on a procedure for the conciliation of disputes. Negotiations to this end were begun, but on November 28th, the CGPF broke off negotiations, perhaps for fear of having any

agreement that it might conclude repudiated by its membership as had almost occurred following the Matignon Agreements.⁵⁸ Having no other recourse but compulsory arbitration, the government immediately drew up a bill, which became law on December 31st, 1936, after having encountered opposition from only the extreme Right in the Chamber.⁵⁹

From the moment compulsory arbitration was first suggested, Le Temps adamantly refused to see any merit at all in it, marshalling every conceivable objection in some eighteen editorials. Compulsory arbitration had been tried in Australia, Norway, and Weimar Germany and nowhere had it proved to be satisfactory, affirmed Le Temps. Union demands became exceedingly high while employers would offer nothing, it added, because each knew that the government arbitrator would chose a figure half-way between the offer of management and the demands of labour.⁶⁰ Labour would not obey the arbitration if it was not in its favour.

Dès lors, l'arbitrage ne jouera pratiquement que dans la mesure qu'il paraîtra avantageux aux syndicats ouvriers. Les arbitres verront leurs décisions bafouées, ou bien, pour éviter la grève, ils donneront satisfaction aux syndicats.

Mais, dans ces conditions, que signifie l'arbitrage?⁶¹

Le Temps even went so far as to argue that, since under the provisions of the proposed law, no strike could take place

before the dispute had been submitted to arbitration, the government was undermining the workers' right to strike.⁶² Compulsory arbitration or not, it asserted, the government would be unable to assure social peace, and was only playing the Communists' game.

When discussions between the government, the CGT and the CGPF on the subject of new arbitration procedures broke down owing to the withdrawal of the employers organization, Le Temps blamed the government and the CGT. The government and the CGT were at fault because they were unwilling or unable to guarantee that a new agreement would be respected by the workers or enforced by a government which still tolerated sit-down strikes. The CGT, in Le Temps' view, nevertheless bore the heaviest responsibility. "La principale raison de l'échec des pourparlers entre les deux confédérations, c'est que la CGT avait refusé de donner aux patrons des garanties sérieuses, au sujet de l'occupation des usines et de la liberté du travail." ⁶³ The failure of the negotiations led the government to take matters into its own hands by instituting compulsory arbitration, which, according to François Goguel, worked very well. ⁶⁴

A further measure intended to diminish strike activity, the 'organisation démocratique de la grève' (that is, the rendering of a strike vote obligatory), was being considered by the cabinet in the same period.⁶⁵ The attitude of Le Temps concerning the proposed law was quite contradictory. In November, it seemed to favour the controlled strike vote, which, it argued, would prevent those strikes which were desired and inflicted by a minority. "Puisque, par malheur, en régime du Front populaire, la guerre sociale est à l'ordre du jour, il n'est pas interdit, il est même recommandé de la légaliser et de la codifier, en attendant de l'humaniser."⁶⁶ In January, however, Le Temps declared that, in the name of liberty, no worker should ever be prevented from working by his fellows.

Le droit d'un ouvrier à travailler est aussi sacré que celui de dix ouvriers à faire grève. Supprimer ce principe et tout s'écroule. Ce n'est plus la démocratie que vous établissez, mais une dictature corporative, une dictature syndicale, qui est très exactement l'une des caractéristiques essentielles du fascisme.⁶⁷

Whether the measure amounted to an attenuation of the class struggle or to fascism was to remain a matter

for polemic, for although successive governments toyed with the idea during the late '30s, it was never made law.

Le Temps' view of the situation of the economy underwent a complete transformation between the devaluation and early 1937. Still quite pessimistic in September, by January it told its readers that the depression was over. During the month of October, Le Temps showed concern over the rapid increase in retail prices, urging the government to attempt to slow the price increases and to "tendre vers l'équilibre budgétaire" without increasing taxes in the forthcoming budget.⁶⁸

The budget for 1937, accompanied by a tax reform bill, was presented by Mr. Auriol on October 28th, 1936. An experiment in deficit spending, the 47 billion franc regular budget envisaged that expenditures would exceed receipts by 4.5 billion, while in the extraordinary budget 16 billion francs more, to be obtained by borrowing, were destined for armaments and public works. Income taxes and succession duties were raised to partially cover the increased expenditures and the tax on business transactions was simplified in an effort to minimize fraud.

Le Temps, in commenting on the tax reforms, indicated that it was favourable to them in principle but complained that these "quelque mesures démagogiques" were not thorough enough and had been introduced merely as a sop to calm the impatience of the PC.⁶⁹ As for the budget itself, it was not a budget at all, declared Le Temps, because it did not balance.

Sans doute, on peut interpréter les élections derniers...comme une condamnation de ce qu'on appelle la politique de déflation, c'est-à-dire la politique d'économies et d'équilibre budgétaire. Mais le pays n'a tout de même pas souhaité l'avènement d'une politique de déséquilibre systématique.⁷⁰

Le Temps called on the Senate to exercise its right and its duty of resistance.

Encouraged by "le raidissement patronal" of which the breakdown of the negotiations between the CGPF and the CGT was a symptom, the Senate was slow and recalcitrant in its deliberations over the budget and over other controversial matters before it.⁷¹ Yet it seemed that the more obstructive the Senate became, the more sharply and frequently Le Temps criticized Parliament for legislating in haste (a haste which was now far less marked than

it had been the previous summer).⁷² Like a bird of carrion which senses that its intended victim is weakening, the boldness of Le Temps seemed to grow as the difficulties of the government mounted.

During this period of rising prices, pressures from labour for a general increase in salaries grew. The CGT and the Communists, who at this time seemed to be returning to a class-based policy,⁷³ backed the working-class pressure, calling once more for the sliding wage scale. The Communist manoeuvres, declared Le Temps, were "sans doute la plus grande obstacle au retour définitif de la confiance."⁷⁴ Whatever the reason for the lack of confidence among investors, it posed a problem for the government in that it inhibited the return of gold to France and rendered public borrowing difficult. In an effort to obtain funds and restore confidence at the same time, Auriol offered to exchange high interest-bearing government bonds against Auriol bonds (the holders of these bonds, issued the previous summer had lost badly at the time of the devaluation) and gold, while giving his solemn word that exchange controls would not be instituted. For this Auriol, "dont la bonne

volonte est certaine", received Le Temps' congratulations, to which was added the hope that the government would take steps in other realms as well toward the creation of a climate of confidence.⁷⁵

Although price increases gave cause for worry, generally the French economic situation had steadily improved since the devaluation and was to continue to do so until mid-March, 1937.⁷⁶ On January 12th, Le Temps went so far as to state "... la crise économique est terminée, on peut maintenant le dire." This was not, however, due to the New Deal or the Popular Front -- quite the contrary. "Les forces naturelles, en dépit de toute les obstacles, ont fini par l'emporter. Une fois de plus le libéralisme économique a vu ses règles se vérifier." How? "La surproduction de matières premières et de denrées agricoles, cause principale de la crise, à peu a peu disparu. Les mauvaises récoltes de l'an dernier ont achevé d'assainir les marchés." From now on, the government would have to see that an artificial and feverish boom did not occur.⁷⁷

(ii) The Last Reforms

Before dealing with the circumstances that brought about its fall, it is necessary to return to the government's activity in the legislative sphere. Le Temps' attitudes toward reforms in national education, colonial administration, agriculture and defense will be discussed, as well as its criticisms of the modalities in the application of the forty hour week law. Although the Education Minister, Jean Zay, was a Radical, he was a Left-wing reforming Radical and hence he incurred the systematic hostility of Le Temps. Zay's reforming activity was intense and it has been characterized as "l'une des plus fructueuses qu'ait réalisée un ministre du Front populaire."⁷⁸

As will be recalled, a bill prolonging the period of compulsory education, passed in August, 1936, had met with considerable criticism from Le Temps and continued to do so in the period of its application.⁷⁹ On March 2nd, 1937, Zay presented a second bill, this time with the intention of reforming secondary education. The first reaction of Le Temps was highly favourable. "... nous nous en voudrions de ne pas marquer expressément que le projet de M. Jean Zay a évité de graves

écueils et supprimé des confusions dommageables."⁸⁰

One can only conclude that Le Temps did not understand the full implications of the proposed reform immediately, for only a short time later, it was deploring all aspects of the bill, and criticizing the harshness and mechanical nature of the reform.⁸¹ The bill made it necessary for the student to obtain a certificate of primary studies before entering the "sixième".⁸² 'Sixième' would no longer be devoted to secondary education, but would become a year of orientation at the end of which the student would be directed into either a classical, a modern, or a technical pattern. Within secondary education itself, 'l'enseignement primaire supérieur' (modern), technical and classical patterns were to be more closely attached to each other and integrated, making it easier for students to switch patterns.

Le Temps' revised view of the reform was somewhat contradictory. It argued that the bill would amount to a socialist levelling, at the same sustaining that the regime of studies would be too onerous and would subject the students to severe strain.⁸³ As far as orientation of the students at the age of eleven was concerned, apart from the fact that eleven was too young, it was destructive

of the family since it tended to remove an important initiative from the parents. "Les parents, de concert avec leurs enfants, qu'ils connaissent mieux que personne, choisissent selon leurs convenances, leurs moyens, leurs traditions, leurs ambitions, légitimes après tout."⁸⁴ The removal of a year from secondary education, Le Temps felt, would weaken the programme of classical humanities and "l'esprit critique qu'elles dispensent". In its estimation, it would still be difficult to change patterns following orientation in spite of the semi-integration of the three patterns, the only result of which would be to mix future carpenters, accountants and humanists in the same educational environment. The reform, charged Le Temps, was inspired by the CGT, and it constituted an attack on classical studies in the name of a utilitarian modernism.⁸⁵

Monnet, the Minister of Agriculture, was also subject of Le Temps' wrath in early 1937. In February, he introduced a law providing for collective marketing agreements for the sale of specific agricultural products. The bill was especially desired by the milk producers' association and the beet-growers' lobby,⁸⁶ and could be

brought into application in any branch of agriculture if the majority of producers were in favour of it.

Le Temps criticized this project from the point of view of outraged liberalism. "Le régime antérieur à la révolution était libéral et démocratique a côté de celui que préparent les conventions collectives de vente."⁸⁷ These constituted a further step toward the destruction of the peasants' independence.

Quand les paysans seront contraints de vendre leurs produits aux conditions fixées par les dirigeants des coopératives et syndicats, ils ne seront plus guère que les salariés de ceux-ci. Le marché libre et la libre disposition des produits du sol auront disparu. Notre agriculture ne sera plus très loin du régime des kolkhozes. Le socialisme, qui avait jadis inscrit dans son programme l'abolition du salariat, conduit en réalité tout droit au salariat pour tous, comme on peut le voir en Russie.⁸⁸

The law, which passed the Chambers by 370 votes to 310, was never discussed by the Senators. It was not until twenty-five years later, during the Republic of Mr. de Gaulle, that this measure of "salariat pour tous" became law.⁸⁹

Le Temps also objected to the government's use of the Wheat Board price fixing machinery to prevent grain prices from rising with the cost of living.⁹⁰ It complained that the problem of the migration of farm labourers to the city was being aggravated by the Popular Front's social legislation which caused urban working conditions to improve faster than those of the rural areas since laws such as the forty hour week were virtually impossible to apply on farms.⁹¹ By early summer Le Temps was again declaring its concern about Communist-led union agitation among farm workers.⁹²

The Popular Front was perhaps at its most ineffective in its attempts to bring about reforms in the French colonial empire. Its promises of democratic liberties and social legislation for colonial natives were badly kept and efforts of a commission of enquiry were, according to Guérin, sabotaged by a bureaucracy that had remained imperialist.⁹³ Guérin also affirms that the Communist strategy was to back the administration against the colonial natives so that France might not be deprived of a means of support in the event of a war with the fascist powers.⁹⁴ Le Temps, on the other hand, felt

that Communist duplicity was at work here too, that their agitation was still exercising a nefarious influence in the empire.⁹⁵

Agitation and discontent had been particularly apparent in North Africa. It had been evident for several years before the electoral victory of the Popular Front⁹⁶, with demands for the assimilation of Moslems into the French political community taking precedence over those for social change.⁹⁷ Two opposing theories, assimilation and association, coexisted in French colonial doctrine theory and the resultant dichotomy rendered the formulation of a consistent colonial doctrine impossible during the inter-war period.⁹⁸ Assimilation was favoured by indigenous intellectuals, in the manner of Bourguiba and Ferhat Abbas, as well as by the Popular Front government. Association, which, in essence, meant the maintenance of the status quo, was preferred by the 'colons' and all others who disliked the prospect of according political privileges to the Moslems.

Le Temps, in its issue of August 11, 1936, boasted that its campaigns for Franco-Moslem co-operation and political association had helped form the Republic's

policy in this regard. It added that it had always been pro-Moslem. The limitations of Le Temps sympathy for the North African natives became evident on several occasions. In August, 1936, a plan known as the Blum-Viollette project was drawn up in an attempt to give at least partial satisfaction to the Algerian native reform movement. Drawing its inspiration from Marshall Lyautey's thinking, the bill was assimilationist and would have allowed certain Algerians to become French citizens without renouncing the Koranic laws. To begin with, it would have affected only some 20-25,000⁹⁹ native soldiers, teachers, officials and holders of French degrees -- out of a total population of over seven million. Given that, the project seemed hardly likely to threaten the political preponderance of the colonists, the uproar that it caused among them is scarcely credible. The 'Parti social français' (the reconstituted 'Croix de feu') and local politicians created such a furor in North Africa when the bill was being discussed by the Senate in 1938 that the Senators took fright and shelved it.¹⁰⁰

Le Temps initially stated that it is agreed that suffrage ought to be extended to many categories of

Algerians, but that the change ought to be brought about by parliamentary action and not by decree. "une réforme comme celle des droits politiques des indigènes musulmans algériens ne saurait être affectuée par le biais, timide et comme honteux d'un simple décret."¹⁰¹ Le Temps must have know full well that the procedure which it advocated and which the government finally adopted would only serve to allow the opposition to marshall its forces. At any rate, two months later it was already modifying its own position with regard to what it now called an "assimilation à toute vitesse."

Pour parler net, dans l'instant où nos pupilles algériens sont travaillés par des influences antinationales, politiques, religieuses, ou étrangères; dans l'instant où plus qu'à tout autre moment depuis cents ans la France a le devoir d'être pour les indigènes musulmans d'Algérie un guide clairvoyant et affectueux, le gouvernement est aux prises avec des 'réformateurs' dont la précipitation est pour le moins inquiétante.¹⁰²

The solution Le Temps recommended for the appeasement of native unrest was a policy of authority and paternalism. When the government, having originally relaxed repressive

measures in Tunisia, later re-installed what Brace calls "an iron-fisted French administration", thereby giving in to pressure from the 'colons', Bourguiba's Neo-Destour party staged a peaceful protest demonstration. The police fired on them and some two hundred were killed.¹⁰³ Le Temps blamed the blood-bath on the talk of untenable reforms, on Communism and on other obscure and un-named forces which, it said, must be repressed. The real root of the disorders lay in the poor and unsanitary living conditions of the natives, insufficient food and inadequate housing.

Dans cette ordre d'idées presque tout reste à faire et c'est là une tâche à laquelle devraient s'atteler sans tarder les pouvoirs publics. Seule sa réalisation est susceptible d'apaiser certains rancoeurs légitimes et de ramener chez les masses frustes et souvent misérables la confiance dans la bonté française.¹⁰⁴

Thus, the feeling of Le Temps seemed to be that by providing for the natives' material needs, France could neglect their no less pressing need for self-respect and political expression.

In the matter of defence, Le Temps made a point of being much more moderate in its criticisms of

government policy, perhaps because it felt that it was disloyal and even dangerous to emphasize the weaknesses of the military establishment.¹⁰⁵ Le Temps may also have been hesitant to offend the Minister of Defence, Daladier, who already seems to have been the man who was expected to head a new government of 'union nationale', should the Popular Front falter. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Le Temps was a firm supporter of the Reynaud-de Gaulle thesis, and although it was obviously not entirely satisfied with the hesitations of Daladier and the General Staff, it was very polite in saying so.

... le nombre n'est pas tout. Encore faut-il vouloir de toute nos forces compenser l'infériorité numérique par la supériorité de la qualité technique. Rien ne serait plus dangereux à cette égard, que de se complaire dans l'étude admirative du passé. La prudence légitime ne doit pas exclure l'imagination nécessaire. Crainte vaine assurément à l'heure actuelle. Nous attendons donc avec confiance, du ministre de la défense nationale, des déclarations fermes, précises sur l'indispensable équipement technique de l'armée française.¹⁰⁶

Of the French arms effort Jacques Chastenet tells us:
"Le pays n'a véritablement commencé à se constituer une

armement moderne qu'à la fin de 1936, c'est-à-dire deux ans après l'Allemagne."¹⁰⁷ The expropriation of the armament industry was part of this effort, although because of the time limit put on the expropriation by the Senate (up to March 31st, 1937), and the financial difficulties of the government, only the aircraft industry was nationalized on a large scale. Challenger indicates just how necessary this was. "Cot (the Minister of Air) hoped to set up a national organization which could modernize an industry that everyone realized was backward and inefficient," as well as being vulnerable because it was highly concentrated in the Paris region.¹⁰⁸

Le Temps, noncommittal as to the effects of nationalization, warned that the time had come to stop studying prototypes and to speed up production of modern aircraft.¹⁰⁹ Noting that the Anglo-German naval agreement had set off a naval arms race, Le Temps lamented that France would be in a bad position to compete because of the forty hour week. It suggested that most of the 30% increase in the naval budget was being eaten up by the new social laws. Italy, it noted, was accomplishing an equivalent armament effort for less money.¹¹⁰ In other words, national defense depended on moral as well as

material factors, concluded Le Temps, and the fact that the Popular Front, and worse, the PC, were in power could only serve to sap the discipline and morale of the country.¹¹¹

The forty hour week had been voted in the summer of 1936, and was rapidly put into operation at the insistence of the CGT, in spite of the reservations of the government, which would have preferred to see the application of the law spread over a period of years.¹¹² Beginning on November 1st, 1936, with its introduction in the mines, by June, 1937, the forty hour week was in vigour in all sections of the economy, with the exception of agriculture. Having abstained from commenting on the forty hour week when it was before Parliament, it was only at the end of 1936 that Le Temps began to attack the measure. It showed special concern with the effects that the forty hour week would have in certain industries. Noting that new agreements signed in Geneva among world shipping powers had just approved the forty-eight hour week in principle, Le Temps pointed out that the new French labour laws put France's merchant marine in a distinctly uncompetitive position.¹¹³ It also pointed to a rapid drop in the productivity of the coal mines, arguing that costs

here, as in the railways, would increase, putting both industries in difficulty.¹¹⁴ For the whole of French industry, Le Temps calculated that once the forty hour week had been completely applied the rise in production costs would be to the order of 75%. France's trade position would be damaged as French prices continued to be relatively higher than those abroad and the government would be once again forced into a position where a choice would be necessary between autarchy and a further devaluation.¹¹⁵

(iii) Collapse

Despite the optimism of Le Temps and of government officials in January, the health of the economy remained uncertain, and on February 13th, 1937, Blum announced in a radio speech to the nation's civil servants that the government was temporarily freezing their wages, and that a period of pause was necessary before proceeding to further reforms. He justified the 'pause' by necessity of allowing private sectors of the economy time to convalesce, by the ever-increasing armament

expenditures, and by the government's need to improve its fiscal situation.¹¹⁶

Whatever the reasons for the 'pause', it was evident the government had been forced to change its policy, and Le Temps was understandably pleased. It considered the 'pause' to be an implicit avowal by the Popular Front government that the latter's economic theories were false and ill-founded.

Par le fait même qu'il demande aux fonctionnaires d'attendre, pour obtenir satisfaction, la reprise économique et la reprise financière, par le fait qu'il invoque le déséquilibre redoutable des finances publiques en même temps que les besoins privés de capitaux, le président du conseil montre la fausseté de la théorie de l'accroissement de la consommation par l'augmentation du pouvoir d'achat que devait suppléer aussi bien aux faiblesses économiques qu'aux déficiences financières. ¹¹⁷

If it could not resist this sort of dig at the Popular Front, in general, Le Temps was highly appreciative of the increasingly conservative financial measures taken by Auriol since about mid-January. "M. Auriol revient aux préceptes les plus raisonnables en matière de finance

publique."¹¹⁸ Continuing large-scale exports of capital, Le Temps admitted, were making Auriol's task difficult, since they both weakened the franc and rendered investment capital scarce. Only by a firm policy of budget trimming, it concluded, could the government restore the confidence of investors and reverse the flow of capital. By the same token, government borrowing would be facilitated.¹¹⁹

Although Le Temps speculated that the government might institute stiffer price controls and higher tariffs, or even frankly introduce socialism, now that the cabinet had presumably seen the error of the buying power theory, it was obviously uncertain as to the genuine long-range plans of the government. "Mais que veulent-ils faire? Aller au delà de leur programme qu'ils n'osent déjà réaliser tout entier et lui substituer un programme socialiste? Veulent-ils vraiment changer de direction? La question est maintenant posée."¹²⁰ However, the only immediate measure Blum took was to introduce a new price control law, which, in Le Temps' view, did not have much chance of success, since for the most part, the rise in prices had not been illicit, but a result of rising costs.¹²¹ Small retailers, like farmers and civil servants,

it charged, were now being deprived of their fair share of the supposedly general increase in buying power.¹²²

On March 5th, Vincent Auriol announced a return to old-fashioned, balanced-budget government financing. The following measures were to be taken; the Bank of France would henceforth buy gold without penalizing the holder; a commission composed of ultra-orthodox financial experts was created to manage the Exchange Equalization Fund; new expenditures were renounced; and a bond issue was to be offered under very favourable conditions. Evidently, the government's hesitations had been overcome by the urgent requirements of the treasury, if such hesitations had existed. Le Temps, while undoubtedly pleased with the measures announced, foresaw that neither the CGT nor the PC would be equally pleased and it called on the government to enforce at least the passive acceptance of the new policy on the workers if it wanted the loan to succeed.¹²³ If the loan failed, declared Le Temps, it would be the fault of the PC, "...qui reclamant encore aujourd'hui l'exécution intégrale du programme du Rassemblement populaire."¹²⁴

The loan, set aside for National Defense and limited to 10.5 billion by the Senate, was guaranteed against

future inflation. It was an immediate success. Offered in two portions of five and three billion on March 12th and 16th, 1937, the loan was completely subscribed by the end of each of the two days of issue.¹²⁵ A third and final portion was to be offered to the public several days later. The middle classes, said Le Temps, had supported the loan very well and if the workers, or rather their leaders, were to do as much by renouncing their attitude of class struggle, it added, then the government would indeed be able to govern for the entire nation.¹²⁶

Unfortunately, a violent incident in the working-class suburb of Clichy on March 16th marred the new atmosphere of confidence and rendered the success of the government's new policy problematical. The 'fascist' 'Parti social francais' had been permitted to hold a meeting in a Clichy theatre, and the local Popular Front municipal council, considering this to be a clear provocation, organized a counter-demonstration outside the theatre. The police arrived, someone opened fire, and the demonstration became a massacre with 5 person killed and 200 wounded. While the origin of the shooting remains a mystery, Lefranc points out that the authorities found

certain inconclusive evidence which would seem to incriminate agents provocateurs of the 'Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire', a Right-wing terrorist organization.¹²⁷

Le Temps castigated the counter-demonstration as an attempt of the extreme Left to deny freedom of assembly to its opponents. "L'on ne saurait rien de plus attentatoire au principe de la liberté individuelle; les extrémistes se sont livrés hier, à un acte d'intolérance sans excuse..."¹²⁸ Without being explicit, Le Temps clearly felt that the Communists were responsible for the violence, which it called:

... une tentative armée dont le moins qu'on puisse dire est que, se produisant le jour même de la deuxième émission de l'emprunt et à quelques semaines de l'ouverture de l'Exposition, elle paraît avoir été dirigée aussi bien contre le relèvement national que contre l'ordre républicain.

That a Leftist government should preside over a massacre of workers seemed inadmissible to many of its supporters. The government, however, went about re-establishing its solidarity by the time-tested formula of republican defense, adopting the attitude that the meeting of the 'Parti

social français¹ in working-class Clichy had been an intentional provocation. It re-opened judicial procedures against the reconstituted leagues, began a purge of the police force, and permitted a brief general strike, all of which naturally irritate Le Temps. "Il résulte de tous ces faits et de tous ces dires, que le gouvernement, qui semblait avoir agi correctement avant et pendant les tristes incidents de Clichy, cède depuis lors aux menaces des partis extrêmes de sa majorité."¹³⁰

In any case, Blum and Le Temps were in agreement that the economic situation which, in Blum's words "...depuis dix mois...n'avaient jamais semblé meilleure, plus stable, plus forte."¹³¹ was now gravely menaced. The Clichy affair angered the working-classes and it set off a new wave of popular unrest, re-awakening the fears of the bourgeoisie.

The French economy situation had been steadily improving since the time of devaluation. French prices had fallen into line with foreign prices, while between October, 1936, and April, 1937, the index of the volume of manufactured goods exported rose from 75 to 88 and the index of unemployment fell from 173 to 143. The index of industrial production rose from 93 in August, 1936, to

105 in April, 1397.¹³² If the profit margins of large enterprises had risen by 36% between the fiscal years 1935-36 and 1936-37,¹³³ the real purchasing power of farmers, workers, and those living off investments remained substantially unaltered.¹³⁴ The criticism has been made that the most notable result of Blum's inflationary economic policy was to strengthen large-scale industries at the expense of the small.¹³⁵ If the policy of obtaining high wages for the working class had not been remarkably successful, had not the workers' momentarily increased buying power stimulated economic activity? Marjolin, a contemporary economist, denied that such inflationary trends had any direct influence on economic activity, and attributes the brief French recovery to the effects of an improved world economic situation.¹³⁶ More recent observers seem to feel the September devaluation was responsible for the mid-winter economic upsurge.¹³⁷

The new decline of the state of the French economy which became evident in April, predating the renewed world economic decline by several months, has been variously attributed to the effects of the forty hour week,¹³⁸ to the conservatism and nervousness of French capitalists,¹³⁹ and to the unco-operative attitude of labour.¹⁴⁰ With

the application of the forty hour week, the number of working hours in big establishments had fallen by five per cent between April, 1936, and April, 1937, and yet industrial production rose by three per cent. In other words, the productivity of the individual worker had risen by eight per cent,¹⁴¹ something that Le Temps did not choose to admit. The working class, said Le Temps, was being taught by its leaders to desire a terrestrial paradise where life was easy and the necessity for work not pressing. "L'ouvrier exalté par la CGT veut vivre mieux, ce qui est fort légitime; et il veut en même temps beaucoup moins travailler, ce qui est absurde."¹⁴² Emphasizing the supposed paradox even more plainly, Le Temps warned: "Entre l'enrichissement et le repos, a-t-il choisi le repos? Soit, mais il doit comprendre qu'il ne peut avoir les deux à la fois."¹⁴³ If it was grossly unfair to accuse the working class of laziness, it is probably true that the forty hour week did serve to curtail the growth of production to a degree, especially since shift work was never adopted.¹⁴⁴ For Le Temps, which never seemed to have envisaged the possibility of shift work, that production should fall when hours of work were diminished was a quite natural "vérité

élémentaire".¹⁴⁵

Another reason for the failure of the forty hour week to function properly was the intransigent attitude of both capital and labour in the application of the law. "Employers, for their part", writes Colton, "refused to add overtime work to their wage and production costs, which, they complained, were already too high."¹⁴⁶ The unions insisted on a five day week, instead of spreading the forty hours over five and a half or six days, which would certainly have been more convenient in the retail trade, for example.¹⁴⁷ Le Temps charged that Blum had demonstrated an unforgiveable weakness in allowing the union view to prevail. "En vérité, nous assistons à une décomposition de plus en plus avancée de toute autorité publique. Les syndicats dictent au gouvernement l'interprétation des lois en attendant de lui dicter les lois elles-mêmes."¹⁴⁸ It also complained that the CGT was forcing the government to apply the law with too much precipitation.¹⁴⁹

The year 1937 was that of the great Paris Exposition, and the Exposition, as well as being an advertisement for the Popular Front, was expected to

bring considerable numbers of tourists to France, and with them large amounts of badly needed foreign exchange. Instead of being an advertisement, it ended up being a minor humiliation, for the opening date had to be postponed and even when the Exposition was declared open on May 24th, many pavillions were still unfinished. The workers could not be made to hurry, for they feared to finish and find themselves without work because of the inactivity of the construction trade.¹⁵⁰ Le Temps railed against the speciousness of the workers' reasoning.

Le raisonnement qui leur prête M. Labbé (the Exposition's Director) est donc tout à fait faux. Il va à l'encontre de leurs véritables intérêts. Le travail sera en effet suffisant et abondant si le redressement économique s'accomplit, et le succès de l'Exposition en est l'une des conditions. Si l'Exposition échouait, cet échec aggraverait encore le chômage.¹⁵¹

Numerous government dignitaries, including Blum, went to the Exposition grounds to plead with the workers to help speed up the pace of construction; to no avail. Even Jouhaux avowed his inability to control the constant and unjustified strikes, whereupon Le Temps waxed very

sarcastic. "C'est qu'on ne fonde pas l'autorité sur la démagogie. Le gouvernement légal, qui ne s'en est pas toujours défendu, subit la pression de la démagogie syndicaliste, et cette dernière est elle-même dépassée." The CGT, however, did not escape Le Temps' wrath that easily. In February, the government, hoping to remove a pretext for work stoppages, decreed that contractors working for the Exposition must hire only CGT workers. Le Temps responded with a rash of editorials accusing the CGT of wishing to establish a monopoly union, an all-embracing fascist-style union, powerful enough to command the government.¹⁵³

The unabashed CGT, never reconciled to the 'pause', continued to press for a resumption of reforms.¹⁵⁴ Jouhaux and Delmas, the most vocal of the non-Communist CGT leaders (the Communists opposed any further structural reforms), called for the nationalization of all key industries, especially that of credit, and for the implementation of a reinforced programme of public works to be financed by the emission of a 10 billion franc bond issue. Le Temps, for whom the CGT was nearly as detestable as the PC, responded that "... une programme comme celui de la CGT sert peut-être ses visées de dictature, mais il

est assurément de nature à créer une nouvelle crise."¹⁵⁵
As long as Popular Front dignitaries continued to hold forth in this language, it added, the government need not expect a renewal of confidence,¹⁵⁶ and "Quoi qu'ils insinuent, c'est donc bien au gouvernement de Front populaire que s'en prennent le communisme et le syndicalisme révolutionnaire."¹⁵⁷

The last major achievement of the government was to be the renewal, unchanged, of the Matignon Agreements for a further six months. In what was called the Exposition truce, the CGPF and the CGT agreed to this, although the CGT attempted unsuccessfully to have included a clause regulating the conditions of hiring and firing. Le Temps affected to find such a demand exorbitant. It would give a monopoly to government employment offices, which, in Le Temps' opinion, the CGT hoped to use to its advantage, just as it was already trying to see that only its own members found employment. "Le gouvernement ne peut pas à la fois favoriser de tels desseins et proposer une trêve."¹⁵⁸

In late April and in May Le Temps began to take cognizance of increasing danger signs indicating an economic relapse. Noting the growing import-export

imbalance, Le Temps blamed this on the government's social and economic legislation which, it said, had nullified the beneficial effects of both deflation and devaluation, and had increased the disparity between French and foreign prices. France must drastically reduce her production costs, which were the key to her economic problems, or be impelled towards autarchy.¹⁵⁹ The world economic situation, noted Le Temps towards the end of May, was also giving cause for worry again, and repercussions of a newly deepened depression on the weakened French economy could be serious.¹⁶⁰

As for the 'pause', two and a half months of it had changed little.

Mais, hélas! rien en France n'a réellement changé. La bonne foi du gouvernement est hors de doute, et cependant le succès n'a pas répondu aux espérances qu'il a pu concevoir et que nous avons été heureux de concevoir avec lui. Les masses se refusant à toute trêve, sont restées sur le pied de guerre.¹⁶¹

Blum, nevertheless, continued to declare in the strongest terms that the 'pause' would continue. Le Temps warmly approved this firmness, which it once dared to venture, indicated a new policy and not merely a continuation of

the 'pause'.¹⁶² All that was now lacking was a firm policy of resistance to the unions.

However, by the end of May, the stagnation of the economy, and the consequent low tax recovery, were beginning to tell on the Treasury. On May 25, Auriol admitted the difficult financial situation of the government, which had only 4.5 billion on hand, and 2.2 billion of this represented advances from the Bank of France, the use of which would be inflationary. New measures would have to be taken, Auriol added. Le Temps argued that Auriol only had two choices; new economies or new taxes, since renewed inflation was out of the question.¹⁶³ Although it considered the nomination of the intransigent Leftist, Jules Moch, as Under-Secretary of State in charge of economic and social matters to be a bad omen.¹⁶⁴ As late as June 7, Le Temps still gave no indication that it expected any sudden re-orientation of government financial policy.

Le Temps had been watching the state of the Popular Front majority very closely since Christmas, and, it seized on every shred of discord to demonstrate that any coalition of the Left, and in particular, the Popular Front, was destined to ineffectiveness and failure, given

the heterogeneity of the French Left. "S'il fallait trouver à tout prix une définition du Front populaire, on devrait dire, pour approcher autant que possible à la vérité, qu'il est un paradoxe vivant."¹⁶⁵

The strategy of the PC in the Popular Front period was, of course, to adopt an attitude of moderation and patriotism, and thereby avoid frightening the Radicals into the arms of the Right. Le Temps attempted to demonstrate that the Communists were merely perpetrating a farce. When the National Congress of the PC was held in late January of 1937, delegates outdid themselves with what Le Temps considered to be crudely implausible nationalist oratory. Communism and nationalism, warned Le Temps, were irreconcilable, since one represented the concept of the international class struggle and the other, that of the union of all classes within the nation.¹⁶⁶ The political trials under way in the Soviet Union, it added, were an excellent indication of the true nature of Communism.¹⁶⁷ At the congress, Maurice Thorez called for the organic union of the PC and the SFIO, which, he said, was "la condition essentielle" to the success of the Popular Front.¹⁶⁸ If the unification of the two Marxist parties was to be realized, said Le Temps, "On

peut se demander ce que le Front populaire, où les radicaux ne jouent plus déjà que le rôle de comparses, fera à ce moment de la démocratie et du régime républicain... Oh! le parti radical y gardera une belle place, une place de parade."¹⁶⁹ Generally speaking, however, violently anti-communist editorials were less frequent in the first half of 1937 than they had been in 1936.

If it was true that during the election campaign, Le Temps had, like the rest of the Right wing Parisian press,¹⁷⁰ accused the Radicals of allowing themselves to be made the willing tools of the Communists, by early 1937 it had changed tactics. Only a few Left wing Radicals, like Albert Bayet, who offended Le Temps by attributing the Clichy violence to fascist provocation, were still being labelled as dupes. "M. Daladier mérite d'être loué pour avoir parlé raisonnablement et.. M. Albert Bayet, 'membre du comité exécutif du parti radical', continue de servir le communisme en déraisonnant."¹⁷¹ Le Temps did not dissimulate the fact that it considered the Radicals to be heavily responsible for all that had transpired since the elections, in that they had unfailingly supported the government.¹⁷² It warned the Radicals that when the Marxist parties no

needed them, they would be discarded, and that by continuing to govern with the Marxists, they risked being responsible for their own disappearance and doom.¹⁷³

The main ploy of Le Temps was now to appeal to the Radicals sense of responsibility. The Radicals were the designated defenders of the lower middle classes, and by supporting a working-class government, they were harming the interests of their own voters. "En s'associant aux vues et à quelques-uns des actes du Front populaire, le parti radical nuit aux classes moyennes et se nuit à lui-même. C'est l'équivoque de notre temps. La franchise et le courage seuls la dissiperont."¹⁷⁴ The Radicals had a higher responsibility as well, affirmed Le Temps, a responsibility towards the Republic, which the disorders of the Popular Front threatened. The Radicals, it argued, must therefore throw off the tutelage of the Marxists and become itself again, the Left wing of the Republican group of parties. "Le sort du régime dépende, en parti, de la tournure que, dans la proche avenir, prendra ce débat de conscience."¹⁷⁵ And, as ever, Le Temps intermittently called for the adoption of proportional representation, which would ensure the permanent independence of the Radical party.¹⁷⁶

Individual Radicals, particularly those of the Senate (where the Radical party had an absolute majority) demonstrated an increasing coolness toward the Blum government as the year wore on. Le Temps took careful note of these and stressed their significance.¹⁷⁷ At the end of April, it declared that the Radicals were at the end of their patience and that they would soon have to choose between authority and disrespect for the laws, between a policy in the unique interests of the working class and one in the interests of the nation.¹⁷⁸ Still later, it sharply admonished those Radicals who were forever complaining about the faults of the government, but who dared not take the responsibility of overthrowing the government. The conservative Radicals it declared, "...parlent plus volontiers qu'ils n'agissent."¹⁷⁹

By early June, the government was faced with serious fiscal difficulties, and was unable to meet its expenses without having recourse to extraordinary measures. That the government intended to take measures displeasing to the Right, and that it expected resistance from the Senate was evident from the tenor of speeches by Blum and Jouhaux. In the Chamber, Blum said that if his

regime were to flounder, it would seem that the regime was unreformable,¹⁸⁰ and Jouhaux warned that if the government were to fall, the CGT would not accept it. What Jouhaux was trying to do Le Temps asserted, was to intimidate the Senate. "Depuis plus d'un demi-siècle, la République en a vu d'autres. Elle est restée solide, forte du consentement du pays. Un boulangisme rouge ne l'abattrait pas plus que n'a fait le premier."¹⁸¹

On June 16th, Blum asked the Chamber for special decreee powers to check speculation, control the franc, and to force the repatriation of capital that had been exported, a request that seemed to imply the institution of exchange controls.¹⁸² Both the Radicals and the Communists disliked the proposed measures, and there even seems to have been some question of the Communists withholding their support in the crucial vote, although Dupeux denies this categorically: "... on ne voit pas que le parti communiste ait manifesté la moindre intention."¹⁸³ The government's demand for full powers did pass the Chamber with a reduced majority, but twenty-two Radicals joined the opposition and nine others abstained. Meanwhile, a grave diplomatic crisis, arising from the bombardment of the German cruiser Leipzig by the

Spanish Republicans, made Blum unwilling to envisage a protracted struggle with the Senate.¹⁸⁴

Le Temps denounced any granting of full powers to what is considered a partisan government, "... lui-même dominé par des formations de masses obéissant à la mystique de la lutte de classes." Nevertheless, it placed its hopes in the Senate. "Nous ne pensons pas exagérer en constatant que le Sénat a littéralement entre ses mains le sort de la France et de la République; qu'il est, pour l'une comme pour l'autre, le suprême recours."¹⁸⁵ Le Temps' faith was not ill-placed, for the Senate and in particular, Joseph Caillaux of the Senate Finance Commission,¹⁸⁶ fiercely attacked the government's request. After two adverse votes in the Senate, the terrible Blum government resigned meekly on June 21st, thereby ending, in Le Temps' words, the rule of the Popular Front by divine right.¹⁸⁷ Le Temps, while avoiding any vulgar display of exultation, justified the action of the Senate, which, it argued, was merely doing its duty by refusing to take a leap in the dark.

L'existence d'une majorité de Front populaire à la Chambre ne supprime pas le droit de contrôle du Sénat... L'heure est même venue d'une politique que le Sénat puisse accepter:

on reviendra ainsi à la vérité constitutionnelle en même temps qu'on réalisera l'une des conditions nécessaires du relèvement national.¹⁸⁸

The death of the Blum government was marked by no outburst of working-class violence or indignation, thus proving both Jouhaux's threats and Senate fears to be groundless. Mitzman accounts for the apparent apathy of the working class to the fate of Blum by arguing that his policy of non-intervention in Spain, the refusal of employers to recognize the legitimacy of the workers' new right and privileges, and the dissipation of the benefits of the Matignon Agreements had weakened their confidence in the Popular Front.¹⁸⁹ Certainly, his government had been a cautious, legalistic and basically defensive interlude, and this is not the sort of government which would be able to evoke loyalty and affection, even among its own supporters. Although the end of the Popular Front was not officially acknowledged for another year, its spirit died with the resignation of the Blum government, as Jacques Chastenet indicates.

Ainsi finit le 'ministère des masses' et, peut-on dire aussi, le Front populaire, car les essais qui vont être fait pour le perpétuer ne seront que de faux-semblants. Sa mystique envolée,prive d'âme,il n'est plus q'un corps, sans vie.¹⁹⁰

Footnotes to Chapter 4

1. Blum, Oeuvres, vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 279
2. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 200, J. Chastenot, "Front populaire, 1936", Revue des Deux Mondes, No. 2 (1962), p. 185
3. W. H. Wynne, "The French Franc, June, 1928 - February 1937," Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 45 (August 1937), p. 505
4. See in particular F. Selleslags, "Les Contrôles des changes et les accords de paiement international," Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles.
5. Larmour, op. cit., p. 77.
6. Rébérioux, op. cit., p. 1212.
7. Le Temps, 27 September, 1936.
8. Werth, op. cit., p. 106. See also Colton, op. cit., pp. 187-188.
9. Le Temps, 25 September, 1936.
10. Ibid., 1 October, 1936.
11. Ibid., 30 September, 1, 3 October, 1936.
12. Ibid., 28 September, 1936.
13. Reproduced in L. Bodin and J. Touchard, Front populaire, Paris, Armand Colin, 1961, p. 49
14. Larmour, op. cit., p. 27.
15. Ibid., pp. 215-218.
16. Le Temps, 8, 15, 22, October, 1936. Proportional representation was recommended by the Universal Suffrage Commission of the Chamber of Deputies again in December, without any notable result.
17. Le Temps, 24 October, 1936.
18. Ibid., 25, 26 October, 1936.

19. Ibid., 19 October, 1936.
20. E. D. Godfrey, The Fate of the French Non-Communist Left, Garden City, Doubleday, 1955, p. 29, takes the same view. "The official line was always working class unity ... but in actuality the communists were unscrupulously trying every way to discredit their closest allies." However, like all other categorical statements about the motivations and tactics of the communists, Godfrey's argument should be regarded as no more than an expression of opinion.
21. Le Temps, 10 October, 1936.
22. Ibid., 6 October, 12 November, 1936.
23. Ibid., 16 November, 1936.
24. Ibid., 6 October, 1936.
25. Ibid., 17 July, 1936. The Popular Front government had re-established the separate status of the recovered provinces by placing them under the administration of a commission, whose task was one of adaption and assimilation. This commission had been dissolved several years earlier.
26. Thorez, Fils du peuple, p. 135.
27. Le Temps, 12 October, 1936.
28. See Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 209-210.
29. Cited in Ibid., p. 210.
30. Chambaz, op. cit., pp. 169-170.
31. Le Temps, 1, 2 November, 1936.
32. Using Salengro's suicide as an example, C. Audry, Léon Blum, ou la politique du juste, Paris, Julliard, 1955, pp. 136-137, criticizes the socialist leaders for their softness and dependence on public opinion for the maintenance of their self-esteem. A Left wing socialist herself, she contrasts this softness with the complete indifference of Thorez to reprobation.
33. Le Temps, 6 November, 1936.
34. Ibid., 20 November, 1936

35. Ibid., 28 November, 1936.
36. Ibid., 4 December, 1936. See also Ibid., 7, 21 November, 1936, 1 February, 1937.
37. Ibid., 6 November, 1936.
38. Ibid., 13 November, 1936, 8 February, 1937.
39. Ibid., 14 January, 1937.
40. Ibid., 25 December, 1936.
41. By this time Communist influence in the CGT was not negligible according to Demas, op. cit., pp. 186-188.
42. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 218-221.
43. Le Temps, 1 December, 1936. That the Soviet Union wished to push France into the war in Spain has also been argued by commentators on the Left (Guérin, op. cit., pp. 80-81) and on the Right (Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième République, p. 163 and G. Bonnet, Défense de la Paix, tome 1: De Washington au Ouai d'Orsay, Bourguin-Genève, Editions du Cheval Aile, 1946.).
44. Le Temps, 29 November, 1936.
45. Ibid., 7 December, 1936.
46. Ibid., 9 December, 1936.
47. Ibid., 18 December, 1936.
48. Ibid., 10 December, 1936.
49. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 289.
50. Le Temps, 17 November, 1936.
51. Ibid., 17 December, 1936.
52. Ibid., 28 January, 1937.
53. Ibid., 4 November, 1936.
54. Ibid., 16, 18 October, 8, 26 November, 11, 16, 19, 31 December, 1936, 1 January, 1937. These complaints

were quite unjustified, for there were fewer strikes in November than there had been in April, 1936. H. W. Ehrmann, French Labour From Popular Front to Liberation, New York, Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 40.

55. Ibid., 26 November, 1936.
56. Ibid., 19 December, 1936.
57. Ibid., 31 December, 1936
58. See Ehrmann , Organized Business, p. 37, Goguel, op. cit., pp. 392-393, and V. Lorwin, The French Labour Movement, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1954, p. 78.
59. Bonnefous, Histoire politique, Vol. 6, pp. 84-85.
60. Le Temps, 27 September, 1936.
61. Ibid., 4 October, 1936.
62. Ibid., 4 December, 1936, 7 January, 1937.
63. Ibid., 29 November, 1936.
64. Goguel, op. cit., p. 393. Le Temps itself was later forced to admit this. Le Temps, 6 June, 1937.
65. See Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 332-335.
66. Le Temps, 30 November, 1936.
67. Ibid., 10 January, 1937.
68. Ibid., 16, 28 October, 1936.
69. Ibid., 30 October, 13 November, 1936.
70. Ibid., 13 January, 1937.
71. Dupeux, "L'échec du premier gouvernement...", p. 41, and L. Rogers, "M. Blum and the French Senate", Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 52 (September, 1937), pp. 321-339.

72. Le Temps, 21, 23 December, 1936, 4, 8, 13, 16 January, 6 February, 1937.
73. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 224-225.
74. Le Temps, 9 January, 1937
75. Ibid., 18 December, 1936.
76. R. Marjolin, "Reflections on the Blum Experiment," Economica, Vol. 5 (May, 1938), p. 180.
77. Le Temps, 12 January, 1937.
78. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 301.
79. Le Temps, 21 October, 3, 23 December, 1936, 10 February, 1937.
80. Ibid., 4 March, 1937.
81. Ibid., 14 March, 1937.
82. See Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 299 for details of the bill.
83. Le Temps, 28 April, 1937.
84. Ibid., See also Ibid., 17 March, 11 April, 1937.
85. Ibid., 11, 23, 26 May, 8 June, 1937. See F. Ponteil, Histoire de l'enseignement en France, les grandes étapes, 1789-1964, Paris, Sirey, 1966, pp. 335-340 for a discussion of the battles between the partisans of the classical and modern humanities, which extended throughout the inter-war period.
86. G. Wright, Rural Revolution in France, The Peasantry in the Twentieth Century, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1964, p. 66.
87. Le Temps, 13 March, 1937.
88. Ibid., 14 February 1937. See also Ibid., 15 January, 1937.
89. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 357-358, and Wright, Rural Revolution, p. 67.

90. Le Temps, 12 February, 1937.
91. Ibid., 9 April, 1937.
92. Ibid., 13 June, 1937.
93. Guérin, op. cit., p. 178.
94. Ibid., p. 182.
95. Le Temps, 11 August, 9 October, 1936, 20, 22 January, 1937.
96. J. R. Tournoux, L'Histoire secrète, Paris, Plon, 1962, pp. 107-108.
97. P. Machefer, "Autour de problème algérien en 1936-1936: la doctrine algérien du PSF, le PSF et le projet Blum-Viollette," Revue d'Histoire Moderne, Vol. 10 (1963) pp. 147. A joint congress of the various Algerian political groups, held in July and August 1936 "...reclama notamment l'entrée en masse dans la cité française, mais avec le maintien du statut personnel coranique."
98. R. A. Winnacker, "Elections in Algeria and the French Colonies Under the Third Republic," American Political Science Review, Vol. 32, (1938), p. 277.
99. This figure is Machefer's (Machefer, op. cit., p. 147) R. Brace, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 101, calculates that it would have been 21,000, while Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième, Vol. 6, p. 253, estimates 40,000.
100. See Machefer, op. cit., passim., in particular, for some of the arguments which were used to oppose the bill.
101. Le Temps, 10 October, 1936.
102. Ibid., 21 December, 1937.
103. Brace, op. cit., p. 65.
104. Le Temps, 14 April, 1937.

105. Girardet, in his perceptive study, La société militaire dans la France contemporaine, 1815-1939, Paris, Plon, 1953, p. 314, writes of the attitude of the Right towards the army in the inter-war period, but might equally well have been referring specifically to Le Temps. "L'exaltation de l'idée militaire redevient l'apanage de l'opinion de droite, pour qui l'armée continue à incarner, de façon plus ou moins précise, les principes confondus de l'ordre public, de la conservation sociale et de la fidélité patriotique."
106. Le Temps, 29 January, 1937. See also Ibid., 4 February, 1937.
107. J. Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième, p. 191.
108. R. D. Challener, The French Theory of the Nation in Arms, 1866-1939, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955, pp. 232-233, and J. Néré, La Troisième République (1914-1940), Paris, Armand Colin, 1965, pp. 175-176.
109. Le Temps, 1 January, 2-3, 19 May, 1937. It should be noted in passing that the Battle of France proved for once and for all that charges such as those made by P. T. Dignac, Le malfaiteurs publics (Documents d'histoire, 1924-1940), Paris, Arthaud, 1941, in his chapter, "La carence de notre aviation", were quite unfounded. German losses of airplanes were three times heavier than those of France. E. Angot and R. de Laverne, Le général Vuillemin: Une figure légendaire de l'aviation française de 1914 à 1940, Paris-Genève, La Palatine, 1965, p. 207.
110. Le Temps, 14 January, 12 February 1937.
111. Ibid., 3 February 1937. It might be pointed out that already seven years before, in 1930, long before the Popular Front existed, Tardieu was complaining of the indifference of the country towards the effort necessary for national defense. "Mais que faire avec un pays qui ne veut pas consentir à l'effort nécessaire à son salut. C'est l'opinion française qui constitue le plus grave péril..." Cited in Debu-Bridel, op.cit., p. 77.
112. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 211.

113. Le Temps, 9 January, 31 March, 14 May, 1937.
114. Ibid., 19 January, 11 February, 1937.
115. Ibid., 27 December, 1936.
116. Colton, op. cit., p. 192.
117. Ibid., 15 February 1937, See also Ibid., 17 February 1937.
118. Ibid., 23 January 1937. See also Ibid., 7 February, 1937.
119. Ibid., 30 January, 5, 11, 12 February, 1937.
120. Ibid., 20 February, 1937. See also Ibid., 16, 18, 19, 23, February, 5 March, 1937.
121. Ibid., 21, 23 February, 1937.
122. Ibid., 21 February, 4, 19 March 1937.
123. Ibid., 8, 9 March, 1937.
124. Ibid., 10, 11 March, 1937.
125. Bonnefous, Histoire politique, Vol. 6, pp. 118-119.
126. Le Temps, 14 March, 1937.
127. Refer to Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 239, for a discussion of the activities of the CSAR or 'Cagoule'. See also Plumyène and Lasierra, op. cit., pp. 84-86 and G. Warner, "The Cagoulard Conspiracy," History Today, Vol. 10 (July 1960), pp. 443, 445-446. In November, 1937 the CSAR went so far as to attempt a 'putsch', which failed to get off the ground because of the cautious attitude of the army generals involved. Tournoux, op. cit., pp. 92-100.
128. Le Temps, 18 March, 1937. The government and its partisans were henceforth subject to increasing criticism for their intolerant attitude toward the Right. See 2, 30 March, 7 April, 11, 28, 29 May, 3 June, 1937.
129. Ibid., 18 March, 1937. See also Ibid., 7 May, 1937.

130. Ibid., 20 March, 1937. See also Ibid., 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 28 March, 5 April, 1937.
131. Blum, Oeuvres, Vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 486. Cf. Le Temps, 19 March, 1937.
132. Marjolin, op. cit., p. 180.
133. H. Ehrmann, "The Blum Experiment and the Fall of France," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 20 (1941), p. 156.
134. M. Kalecki, "The Lesson of the Blum Experiment", Economic Journal, Vol. 48 (March 1938), p. 31.
135. Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième, Vol. 6, p. 224.
136. Marjolin, op. cit., p. 182. If we accept Marjolin's reasoning, then we must question his conclusions, for the statistics upon which he bases his argument are of doubtful value. He writes. "In 1936 and 1937, no less than 32 milliard Auriol francs left France. Over this period the government borrowed 32 milliard francs from the Bank. It will be noted that the two figures are exactly the same. It would seem, therefore, that inflation had no direct influence on economic activity." Yet according to the League of Nations Statistical Year-Book (1940-1941), p. 171. France's import-export deficit in gold was over 44 billion francs, which would seem to indicate that the Popular Front experiment did succeed in partially overcoming the effects of the gold hemorrhage. Consult table, p. 245a below.
137. Marjolin, op. cit., pp. 183-184, and P. Alpert, Twentieth Century Economic History of Europe, New York, Schuman, 1951, p. 146.
138. See Colton, op. cit., p. 191, and Ehrmann, French Labour, p. 68.
139. Ehrmann, "The Blum Experiment...", p. 158, writes: "The decay of the French economy can be explained without even mentioning the 40 hour week." To this might be added the following quotation from Colton, op. cit., p. 181: "The sit-down strike of capital, which outlasted the sit-down strikes of labour, in the end proved decisive in the failure of the Blum experiment."
140. Wright, France in Modern Times, p. 487

141. Kalecki, op. cit., p. 27.
142. Le Temps, 2-3, 6, 7 May, 1937.
143. Ibid., 7 April, 1937.
144. Colton, op. cit., p. 174.
145. Le Temps, 27 March, 5 April, 5 May, 1937.
146. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 211.
147. Colton, op. cit., p. 171.
148. Le Temps, 13 April, 1937. See also Ibid., 18, 21 April, 13 June, 1937.
149. Ibid., 8 April, 1937.
150. Ibid., 10 April, 1937, and Lefranc, Histoire du Front Populaire, pp. 239-241
151. Le Temps, 2 April, 1937.
152. Ibid., 15, 29 April, 15 May, 1937.
153. Ibid., 26 February, 13, 26 March, 17, 19 April, 4 June 1937. Lorwin, op. cit., p. 75, agrees that the CGT often did seek a monopoly position. "...the suddenly powerful CGT made attempts to establish a closed shop in some industries, or at the very least, exclusive rights in all-over national representation and in single-industry bargaining."
154. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, pp. 241-242, suggests that they may have wished to see Blum replaced by a more pliant and active premier.
155. Le Temps, 16 April, 1937. See also Ibid., 22 February, 16 March, 6 April, 1937.
156. Ibid., 9 February, 1937.
157. Ibid., 28 April, 1937.
158. Ibid., 6 June, 1937, See also Ibid., 8, 9, 12 May, 11 June, 1937.

- 159. Ibid., 24 April, 19, 30 May, 1937.
- 160. Ibid., 20 May, 1937.
- 161. Ibid., 24 April, 1937.
- 162. Ibid., 1 May, 1937.
- 163. Ibid., 27 May 1937.
- 164. Ibid., 28 May, 1937.
- 165. Ibid., 15 January, 1937.
- 166. Ibid., 24 January, 1937.
- 167. Ibid., 27 January, 1937.
- 168. Lefranc, Histoire du Front populaire, p. 227, discounts this as cunning polemic.
- 169. Le Temps, 25 January, 1937. See also Ibid., 3 March, 11 April, 1937.
- 170. W. R. Sharp, "The Popular Front in France: Prelude or Interlude," American Political Science Review, Vol. 30 (1936), p. 865. "Day in and day out, the reactionary Parisian press taunted the Radicals with having been duped by the new Communist strategy."
- 171. Le Temps, 23 March, 1937.
- 172. Ibid., 18 January, 1937.
- 173. Ibid., 5 January, 27 February, 4 May 1937.
- 174. Ibid., 15 March, 1937.
- 175. Ibid., 12 April 1937, See also 20 April, 1937.
- 176. Ibid., 6 January, 23 April, 17 May, 2, 5 June, 1937.
- 177. Ibid., 21 January, 20, 25, 26 April, 21, 31 May, 1937.
- 178. Ibid., 27 April, 1937.
- 179. Ibid., 21 May, 1937. See also Ibid., 31 May, 1937.

180. Ibid., 8 June, 1937.
181. Ibid., 9 June, 1937.
182. Rogers, op. cit., p. 337.
183. Dupeux, "L'échec du premier gouvernement..,"p.38 and Fauvet, op.cit., pp.211-212. Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième, p.171 claims that the Communists actually phoned Moscow to find out whether or not they ought to support Blum with their votes.
184. Rogers,op.cit.,p.322,and J. G. Grayson,"The Foreign Policy of Leon Blum and the Popular Front Government in France," University of North Carolina, 1962, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 262-274.
185. Le Temps, 18 June, 1937.
186. Using Caillaux as an example, J.G.Heineberg, "The Personnel Structure of French Cabinets", American Political Science Review, Vol.33(1939),p.270,writes: "It would not be erroneous to say that in certain instances, persons have wielded greater power in French government while members of commissions than while ministers."
187. See Guérin, op.cit.,pp.167-171,Dupeux,"L'échec du premier gouvernement..,"pp.38-39,Lefranc,Histoire du Front populaire,pp.251-254,and Rogers,op.cit.,pp. 322-334,for the pros and cons of resisting the Senate further.
188. Le Temps, 22 June, 1937. According to Rogers, op.cit., p. 326, it was theoretically debatable or not the cabinet was actually responsible to the Senate.
189. A Mitzman,"The French Working Class and the Blum Government (1936-1937)",International Review of Social History, vol. 9 (1964), p. 370.
190. Chastenet,"Front populaire,1936",p.189, See also Dupeux, "L'échec du premier gouvernement..,"p.35,and Néré, op.cit., p.171 for similar statements.

C H A P T E R F I V E

Conclusion

The Left, the Right and Fascism

The collapse of the Blum government and of the moral unity of the Popular Front makes it clear that the experiment had ended in political failure. The effort of the Popular Front to end the economic depression in France through deficit spending and wage increases had also failed to produce any durable result. The necessity of ever-increasing armament expenditures, the obstructive attitude of the Senate and the continued inability of the government to obtain the confidence of investors had much to do with the undermining of the government's economic policies, of which Kindleberger has written: "The Blum government has been attacked for economic illiteracy and for lack of economic realism. But ideas were not lacking and in a different setting, the same ideas, more or less, produced an entirely different result."¹

Of the structural and social reforms proposed by the government and imposed by the sit-down strikes, an entirely different conclusion can be drawn. The conquests of June 1936, the forty hour week apart, were to stand the test of

time. Solid benefits had been obtained by the working classes (and the peasants had profited as well) during that period, which could not easily be taken away by the forces of social conservatism. The unions achieved a strength and a degree of confidence which they had never known in the past and which they never entirely lost again.

It was this new atmosphere of social ferment, of working-class confidence (and disorderliness) which Le Temps detested most. From the day that the Popular Front government took office in the midst of the period of sit-down strikes until the day it resigned, a year later, Le Temps never ceased criticizing its weakness and its failure to resist working-class demands. The government, warned Le Temps again and again, would absolutely have to put a damper on the effervescence of the workers by adopting an attitude of authority. A civilized society, in Le Temps' opinion, could only be based on hierarchy and discipline; therefore, only when order had been restored and the pretensions of the workers repudiated by an ostentatious show of force, could France return to normal.

While Le Temps found itself in disagreement with

virtually every reform and every policy proposed by the Popular Front, it was consistently polite and courteous in its references to the government and to members of the government. Even when it was obviously in violent disagreement with the actions of certain ministers, such as Jean Zay or Robert Jardillier (whom, it felt, were allowing the CGT to influence their policy decisions), it carefully refrained from attacking them personally. An amusing evidence of the perfunctory and patronizing nature of its sometime governmentalism was that whenever it wished to adopt a charitable attitude towards a minister in spite of his policies, it invariably used on stock phrase: "dont la bonne volonte est certaine" (translation- 'he means well'). This scrupulously careful behaviour was a part of Le Temps' tradition, and it has been noted that during its entire history, even under the Second Empire, it had never been prosecuted.²

As has been indicated earlier, Le Temps often attempted to demonstrate the illogical nature of any Leftist political alliance, condemned to impotence by the disparate nature and aspirations of the parties of the Left. While denouncing the Popular Front as a whole, and particularly the presence of the Communists in the

alliance, Le Temps almost completely ignored the existence of the SFIO, which was after all by far the largest party of the majority. While it referred willingly and sometimes even benevolently to SFIO ministers, its rare references to the party itself usually consisted of equating the SFIO and the PC as the two revolutionary, international Marxist parties. It referred, however, often and at lengths to the Radical party, which being neither Marxist, nor revolutionary, nor even internationalist, was really a party of the Right, the Left wing of Republican bloc of parties. To be a member of this Republican bloc, it was necessary for a party to be nationalist and liberal in its economic doctrine, according to Le Temps' definition. This obviously excluded the majority of the Popular Front from the Republican club. It excluded fascists as well as Marxists.

It will be recalled that the Popular Front had been swept into power on a wave of anti-fascist sentiment, the white knight of republican defence, and that the entire Right had at times been accused of fascism or of complicity with the fascists. Le Temps, on the other hand, seemed determined to paint the Popular Front, which it refused to consider as being primarily a republican alliance, with that same fascist brush. For

Le Temps, there was nothing to chose between Marxism and fascism, since both were assaulting the bastion of political and economic liberalism. Thus Le Temps was able to write, concerning the sit-down strikes, that, "Le fascisme a passe sous le forme du Front populaire, et une sorte de dictature du prolétariat s'est institué."³ It used the concepts of socialism, Marxism, fascism and state intervention interchangeably, without any apparent intellectual discomfort. For Le Temps, all that was not liberalism could be equated with fascism or Communism.

The government was accused of fascism when it introduced very mild price control measures, and when it extended subsidies to exporters. These, said Le Temps, were the same sort of measures that were in force in fascist Italy, and were contrary to the natural laws of economics (it should be noted that, at the same time, Le Temps itself was campaigning for increased subsidies for the merchant marine). The Wheat Board was also an application of fascism, in Le Temps' view, since prices were to be fixed by an inter-professional corporate committee.

Le Temps claimed too that the application of the buying power theory would also lead the government in-

exorably towards fascism. The inflationary consequences of this theory would make domestic prices high in comparison to foreign prices, thereby causing a trade deficit which would in turn force the government to raise tariffs. The end result would be a closed economy; fascist autarchy.

In the political sphere as well, the Popular Front was charged with illiberalism and intolerance; of using the State broadcasting system as a government propaganda organization, of attacking the freedom of the press (the law on the press, of course, would only have been oppressive if it had been applied in that spirit), and of undermining the independence of the magistrature. Nearly all of these accusations of political illiberalism were totally unfounded. No historian of the period, or memoir writer, whether of the Left or of the Right, has charged the Popular Front with consistent illiberalism, as Le Temps did.

The genuine incarnation of fascism in France, as Le Temps saw it, was the CGT. According to Le Temps, this powerful union was seeking to create a dictatorial and undemocratic monopoly, a fascist-style state union. The CGT, warned Le Temps, was a danger to the regime,

for it was also attempting to gain control of the administration of the Republic, to sovietize that administration, thereby instituting the dictatorship of the proletariat... "une dictature corporative, une dictature syndicaliste."

If Le Temps tried to unearth fascism on some rather unexpected places on the Left, it maintained an absolute silence in its editorials as to the activities of France's real fascists and semi-fascists. For example, when Léon Blum was attacked in the street by ruffians of the Action Française League, Le Temps glossed over this case of Rightist violence and used the incident as a pretext to attack the Popular Front and the Sarraut government. Similarly, the violent slanders which led to the suicide of Roger Salengro were virtually ignored, and the occasion was used to accuse the Popular Front of dividing the French nation. When leaguers clashed with Communists in the street, Le Temps invariably blamed the Communists.

Not unexpectedly, the Communists were never specifically singled out as being fascists. There was no need for Le Temps to search for a stick to beat the Communists with. That the PC constituted a malignant

tumor in the French body politic was a self-evident dogma and an article of faith for Le Temps. French Communists, in its estimation, were not upholders of an ideology, still less were they a political party; they were simply agents of the Soviet Union whose submissiveness to Moscow was unquestioning and unquestionable. At times, especially during the spring and summer of 1936, the Communists were charged with fomenting strikes in order to instill a pre-revolutionary mentality in the workers, while weakening the nation's power to resist a revolution. By September, Le Temps' explanation of the recurring strikes had changed and the Communists, still the instigators of the strikes, in the newspaper's opinion, were credited with new motives. Le Temps now said that the Communists were, and had been since the elections, working only to discredit the government in the eyes of the people by encouraging the workers to demand more than the government was able to grant. The Communists, according to Le Temps, were also trying to force the government into leading France on an ideological crusade against the fascist powers.

It is clear that Le Temps verbally resisted virtually every aspect of Popular Front policy; its deficit financing, its social and economic reforms, its tolerance of working-class agitation, and its anti-fascism, with consistent intransigence. Yet, the newspaper was often far from willing to envisage the Blum government's downfall. Thus a seeming paradox was evident in the editorial columns of Le Temps for many months, as it opposed the entire policy of the government without opposing the government itself. This curious and ambivalent attitude arose, it would seem, from a double fear on the part of Le Temps. Le Temps feared that if the Blum government were overthrown by the Right, something like revolution might break out, and it also feared that if Blum was overthrown by the Communists, his government would be replaced by a much less moderate cabinet. Only by the spring of 1937, when either consequence seemed less likely than in earlier months, did Le Temps permit itself to call for the overthrow of the government.

If Le Temps did not desire the immediate collapse of the Popular Front coalition, it did attempt to convince its readers that the presence of the coalition in power

was fostering, actively and passively, the installation of a form of fascism in France. By its tolerant and permissive behaviour towards the CGT, the government, in Le Temps' opinion, was favouring the development of a proletarian, fascist dictatorship over the economic and social life of the French nation. The economic doctrine upheld by Le Temps was that of classical liberalism in its purest form, and, as has been indicated, what today would be considered rather commonplace interventions of the government in the field of economic activity were branded as being fascist measures. The modest attempts of the government to protect the regime from the danger posed by Right wing extremists were attacked as instances of undemocratic illiberalism.

This stance of unbending opposition to the Left was complemented by an attitude of benevolence towards all elements of the Right. Therefore, it can be affirmed that Le Temps, which had been considered to be middle-of-the-road at the turn of the Century, had become intransigently Right wing by the late 1930's, reflecting the intensified divisions of the Republic and the virtual disappearance of the political Centre at that time.

Manevy has written that the extent to which the owners of Le Temps, the coal and steel associations, controlled its editorial policy is difficult to ascertain.⁴ It has been noted earlier in this thesis that while the CGPF, in which these associations exercised a preponderating influence, had taken the initiative in the talks leading to the conclusion of the Matignon Agreements, Le Temps called them the worst defeat which the Republican regime had ever incurred. One may deduce from this that Le Temps had taken an editorial standpoint which did not reflect the view of its owners. However, it is also permissible to suspect that the trusts might have been rather bitter about the extent of the concessions which they had been forced to grant, and that Le Temps' editorials at the time were merely an indication of this bitterness. This suspicion that Le Temps was subject to a control of sorts, which cannot be confirmed objectively, is nevertheless reinforced on several occasions by apparently inexplicable switches in Le Temps' editorial policy. Initially very favourable editorials on the law making it necessary for workers to call a strike vote before actually going on strike and on the reform of secondary education were

replaced days later by sharply critical comments on these same measures. An editorial commending the Blum-Viollette colonial reform was printed on October 10th, 1936. Shortly afterwards, Le Temps stated its opposition to the reform. While no-one would deny that it is normal for the editorial policy of a newspaper to change with regard to specific issues in the light of new information, or changed circumstances, neither of these were a factor in the cases stated above. The speed and violence of the policy changes seem to preclude an evolution in the editors' manner of thinking. It therefore appears entirely possibly that the owners of Le Temps did exercise some degree of control over its editorial line, as de Livois and Lefranc seem to think.⁵

The end of the proud Temps was not a glorious one. With the fall of France, it was moved south to Lyon, in the unoccupied zone. One of its directors, Émile Mireaux, a senator from the Hautes Pyrenées under the Third Republic, accepted a post in Pétain's first cabinet as Minister of Education and Fine Arts. Robert Aron writes that Mireaux would have like to see Le Temps become the quasi-official organ of the Vichy regime⁶. Due to the Marshal's antiparliamentary prejudices (nor

was Pétain any friend of the trusts), Mireaux was dropped from the cabinet, along with four deputies, in September 1940. Le Temps accommodated itself to the increasingly strict censorship until the end of November, 1942, when it finally liquidated itself. Too late, however. Because of its association with the Vichy regime, and the length of time which elapsed before its existence was brought to an end, Le Temps was not permitted to re-appear after the Liberation.

Footnotes to Chapter 5

1. C. P. Kindleberger, Economic Growth in France and Britain, 1851-1950, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 205.
2. Manévy, op. cit., p. 212.
3. See above, Chapter 3, pp. 64-65.
4. Manévy, op. cit., p. 214.
5. See above, Preface, p. (v)
6. R. Aron, The Vichy Régime, 1940-1944, New York, MacMillan, 1958, p. 112.

APPENDIX

Some Factors in the Evolution of the French Economy in the 1930's

Year	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
Index of Industrial Production(1929=100)Footnotes ¹	100	99.1	86.2	71.6	80.7	75.2	72.5	78.	81.7	76.1
International Trade(in millions of francs) ²				29808	28431	23097	20974	25414	42391	32539
A.Exports	58221			19705	18474	17850	15496	15492	23939	20590
B.Imports	8704.2			23601	17579	6665	12697	6937	5284	8735
B.Exports	197.7			2470	11342	12805	25028	26160	30069	12230
Employment in Industry (1929=100) ³	100	100	92.5	80.9	79.4	76.9	73.5	74.1	78.6	81.2
Number of Persons on Unemployment Relief ⁴	2514	56112	273412	276033	345033	426931	431897	350333	375742	245 (2)
Index of Industrial Productivity per Man-hour (1929=100) ⁵			157					170		180
Total Annual Hours Worked(1929=100) ⁶	100	100	88.7	73.6	74.3	71.4	68.2	70.7	66.1	65.9
Index of Daily Earnings(unskilled labour, 1929=100) ⁷	100	108	104	96	95	95	95	105	146	169
Index of Real Income Per Person(base unspecified in source) ⁸			740	748	695	700	709	735	730	715

1. League of Nations, Economic Intelligence Service, op. cit., (1938-1939), p. 180

2. League of Nations, Economic Intelligence Service, op. cit., (1940-1941), p.171

3. League of Nations, Economic Intelligence Service, op. cit., (1938-1939), p. 67

4. Ibid., p. 64

Footnotes to Appendix (Cont'd)

5. J. Fourastié, Le grande espoir du XXe siècle; progrès technique, progrès économique, progrès social, Paris, PUF, 1949, p. 13
6. League of Nations, Economic Intelligence Service, op. cit. (1938-1939), p. 68.
7. Ibid., p. 72.
8. Fourastié, op. cit., p. 54.

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